

# SCI-FI ENTERTAINMENT

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**October 1996:** 30 Years of Star Trek Special Edition. Trek-Insiders: The Real Story? X-Files uncovered. Millennium, Dark Skies and more.

**August 1996:** Summer Movie Issue. Independence Day (ID4) Arrives. James Cameron Interviewed. John Travolta's Phenomenon. The Frighteners.

**June 1996:** Pam Anderson in Barb Wire. Mystery Science Theater 3000 The Movie! The Phantom. The Arrival. The Making of Dragonheart.

**April 1996:** Free X-Files and Star Trek: Deep Space 9 Posters. X-Files Mid Life Crisis. Star Trek: Deep Space 9. The Outer Limits. Babylon 5: Bruce Boxleitner Speaks Out. Hercules & Xena.

**February 1996:** Alien Nation- Fox TV's first series returns to peak form. Quentin Tarantino in Dusk till Dawn. Screenwriter Dan O'Bannon on Alien, Total Recall & Screamers.

**December 1995:** Star Trek: Voyager -- Kate Mulgrew & Tim Russ Interviewed. Creating Toy Story. Terry Gilliam's 12 Monkeys. Robin Williams in Jumanji.

**October 1995:** Voyager: Charting New Territory. X-Files. Space Above & Beyond. Babylon 5. Philip K. Dick's Screamers.

**August 1995:** Sold Out

**June 1995:** Batman Reborn. Stan Winston: Congo. Stallone's John Dredd Preview. Casper F/X. Species.

**April 1995:** Mortal Kombat. Tank Girl. John Carpenter: Mouth of Madness. Stephen King's The Mangler. Comics go Hollywood.

**February 1995:** Sold Out

**December 1994:** Free Star Trek Posters. Star Trek: Generations. Interview with the Vampire. William Shatner: Kirk's Farwell. Voyager Debuts. Deep Space Nine.

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Sci-Fi Entertainment

P.O. Box 749, Herndon, VA 20170

## NOV-DEC MOVIES AND

### SATURDAY, NOV. 2

9:00 a.m. Akira  
1989, Science Fiction  
2:00 p.m. Warning Sign  
1985, Science Fiction, Sam Waterston, Kathleen Quinlan  
4:00 p.m. Pin 1988, Horror, David Hewlett, Cindy Preston  
6:30 p.m. Deep Space 9 Special  
1996, TBA  
8:00 p.m. Alien Nation  
1988, Science Fiction, James Caan, Mandy Patinkin  
12:00 a.m. Alien Nation  
1988, Science Fiction, James Caan, Mandy Patinkin  
4:00 a.m. Blood of the Vampire  
1958, Horror, Donald Wolfelt, Barbara Shelley

### SUNDAY, NOV. 3

3:00 p.m. The Alligator People  
1959, Science Fiction, Beverly Garland, Lon Chaney, Jr.  
4:30 p.m. King Kong Escapes  
1968, Science Fiction, Rhodes Reason, Mie Hama  
8:00 p.m. Deep Space 9 Special  
1996, TBA

### MONDAY, NOV. 4

5:00 p.m. Deep Space 9 Special  
1996, TBA  
6:00 p.m. On a Collision Course with Earth 1995, Speculation, Mike Farrel  
7:30 p.m. Deep Space 9 Special  
1996, TBA  
11:30 p.m. Deep Space 9 Special  
1996, TBA

### WEDNESDAY, NOV. 6

9:00 a.m. On a Collision Course with Earth 1995, Speculation, Mike Farrel  
9:00 p.m. On a Collision Course with Earth 1995, Speculation, Mike Farrel

### THURSDAY, NOV. 7

7:30 p.m. Deep Space 9 Special  
1996, TBA  
11:30 p.m. Deep Space 9 Special  
1996, TBA

### SATURDAY, NOV. 9

9:00 a.m. Gall Force: Eternal Story  
1986, Anime  
1:00 p.m. Deep Space 9 Special  
1996, TBA  
2:00 p.m. Syngenor  
1990, Science Fiction, Starr Andreoff, Michael Lawrence  
4:00 p.m. Nightwing  
1979, Horror, Nick Mancuso, David Warner  
8:00 p.m. SS SSSSSS!  
1973, Science Fiction, Strother Martin, Dirk Benedict  
12:00 a.m. SSSSSSSS!  
1973, Science Fiction, Strother Martin, Dirk Benedict  
4:00 a.m. Nightwing  
1979, Horror, Nick Mancuso,

### SUNDAY, NOV. 10

3:00 p.m. The Colossus of New York 1958, Science Fiction, John Baragrey  
4:30 p.m. Biggles: Adventures in Time 1985, Fantasy, Neil Dickson

### MONDAY, NOV. 11

9:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. Battletar

### Galactathon

### SATURDAY, NOV. 16

9:00 a.m. Roujin Z 1991, Anime  
2:00 p.m. The Bamboo Saucer  
1967, Science Fiction, Dan Duryea, John Ericson  
4:00 p.m. Conquest of Space  
1955, Science Fiction, Eric Fleming, Walter Brooke  
4:00 a.m. Invasion of the Body Snatchers 1956, Science Fiction, Kevin McCarthy, Dana Wynter

### SUNDAY, NOV. 17

3:00 p.m. Last Child  
1971, Science Fiction, Michael Cole, Janet Margolin  
MONDAY, NOV. 18

9:00 p.m. Circuitry Man  
1990, Science Fiction, Jim Metzler, Dana Wheeler-Nichols  
1:00 a.m. Circuitry Man  
1990, Science Fiction, Jim Metzler, Dana Wheeler-Nichols

### TUESDAY, NOV. 19

9:00 p.m. Fahrenheit 451  
1967, Science Fiction, Julie Christie, Oskar Werner  
1:00 a.m. Fahrenheit 451  
1967, Science Fiction, Julie Christie, Oskar Werner

### WEDNESDAY, NOV. 20

9:00 p.m. The Handmaid's Tale 1990, Futuristic, Natasha Richardson, Robert Duvall  
1:00 a.m. The Handmaid's Tale 1990, Futuristic, Natasha Richardson, Robert Duvall

### THURSDAY, NOV. 21

9:00 p.m. 1984 1984, Futuristic, Richard Burton, John Hurt  
1:00 a.m. 1984 1984, Futuristic, Richard Burton, John Hurt

### FRIDAY, NOV. 22

7:00 p.m. Star Wars  
1977, Science Fiction, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher  
10:00 p.m. The Making of Star Wars 1978, Behind the Scenes  
11:00 p.m. Star Wars  
1977, Science Fiction, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher  
2:00 a.m. The Making of Star Wars 1978, Behind the Scenes

### SATURDAY, NOV. 23

9:00 a.m. Record of Lodoss War 1990, Anime  
2:00 p.m. Human Feelings Fantasy, Billy Crystal  
7:00 p.m. The Empire Strikes Back 1980, Science Fiction, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher  
10:00 p.m. The Making of The Empire Strikes Back  
1981, Behind the Scenes  
11:00 p.m. The Empire Strikes Back 1980, Science Fiction, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher  
2:00 a.m. From Star Wars to Jedi: Making of a Saga  
1984, Behind the Scenes  
4:00 a.m. Syngenor 1990, Science Fiction, Starr Andreoff

### SUNDAY, NOV. 24

3:00 p.m. Satan's Triangle  
1975, Horror, Doug MacClure, Kim Novak  
4:30 p.m. My Demon Lover 1987,

Horror, Scott Valentine  
7:00 p.m. Return of the Jedi 1983, Science Fiction, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher  
10:00 p.m. Return of the Jedi: Classic Creatures  
1984, Behind the Scenes  
11:00 p.m. Return of the Jedi 1983, Science Fiction, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher  
2:00 a.m. From Star Wars to Jedi: Making of a Saga  
1984, Behind the Scenes

### THURSDAY, NOV. 28

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Ripley's Marathon  
3:00 p.m. Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan 1982, Science Fiction, William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy  
6:00 p.m. Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home  
1986, Science Fiction, William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy  
9:00 p.m. Star Trek V: The Final Frontier 1989, Science Fiction, William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy

### FRIDAY, NOV. 29

9:00 a.m. The Bamboo Saucer  
1967, Science Fiction, Dan Duryea, John Ericson  
11:00 a.m. Star Quest: Beyond the Rising Moon  
1990, Science Fiction, Tracy Davis  
1:00 p.m. Invasion of the Body Snatchers 1956, Science Fiction, Kevin McCarthy, Dana Wynter  
3:00 p.m. Headstoppers: Horror at the Movies 1992, Documentary  
5:00 p.m. Dr. Terror's House of Horrors 1965, Horror, Peter Cushing, Donald Sutherland  
7:00 p.m. Fantastic Voyage 1966, Science Fiction, Stephen Boyd, Raquel Welch

9:00 p.m. Warning Sign  
1985, Science Fiction, Sam Waterston, Kathleen Quinlan  
11:00 p.m. King Kong vs. Godzilla 1963, Science Fiction  
1:00 a.m. King Kong Escapes  
1968, Science Fiction, Rhodes Reason, Mie Hama  
3:00 a.m. SSSSSSSS!  
1973, Science Fiction, Strother Martin, Dirk Benedict  
5:00 a.m. A Grey Matter Comedy

### SATURDAY, NOV. 30

9:00 a.m. Casshan: Robot Hunter  
1989, Science Fiction  
11:00 a.m. Wizards  
1977, Animated  
1:00 p.m. Trancers 2: The Return of Jack Deth  
1991, Science Fiction, Tim Thomerson, Helen Hunt  
3:00 p.m. Parasite  
1982, Science Fiction, Demi Moore, Robert Gaudin  
5:00 p.m. World of Dracula 1979, Horror, Michael Nouri  
7:00 p.m. Let's Scare Jessica to Death 1971, Suspense, Zohra Lampert  
9:00 p.m. Night Slaves  
1970, Science Fiction, James Franciscus, Lee Grant  
10:30 p.m. The Entity

# SPECIALS ON THE SCI-FI CHANNEL

1982, Horror, Barbara Hershey, Ron Silver  
 1:00 a.m. *Subspecies*  
 1991, Horror, Michael Watson  
 3:00 p.m. *Overdrawn at the Memory Bank* 1983, Science Fiction, Raul Julia, Linda Griffiths  
 5:00 a.m. *The Utilizer/ Making of the Utilizer* 1995, Science Fiction

**SUNDAY, DEC. 1**  
 9:00 p.m. *The Invisible Man* 1933, Science Fiction, Claude Rains, Gloria Stuart  
 1:00 a.m. *The Invisible Man* 1933, Science Fiction, Claude Rains, Gloria Stuart

**SUNDAY, DEC. 1**  
 3:00 p.m. *Dracula* 1931, Horror, Bela Lugosi, Helen Chandler  
 4:30 p.m. *The Night Walker* 1964, Horror, Barbara Stanwyck, Robert Taylor

**FRIDAY, DEC. 6**  
 9:00 a.m. *Fantasy Worlds of Irwin Allen*

**SATURDAY, DEC. 7**  
 9:00 a.m. *8Man After* Science Fiction  
 2:00 p.m. *Fantasy Worlds of Irwin Allen*  
 4:00 p.m. *Johnny's Golden Quest*  
 8:00 p.m. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* 1990, Adventure, Judith Hoag  
 12:00 a.m. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* 1990, Adventure, Judith Hoag  
 4:00 a.m. *Day of the Triffids* 1963, Science Fiction, Howard Keel, Nicole Murray

**SUNDAY, DEC. 8**  
 12:00 p.m. *Fantasy Worlds of Irwin Allen*  
 3:00 p.m. *Frankenstein* 1931, Horror, Boris Karloff  
 4:30 p.m. *Repo Man* 1984, Comedy, Emilio Estevez, Harry Dean Stanton

**MONDAY, DEC. 9**  
 9:00 p.m. *Child's Play* 2 1990, Horror, Alex Vincent

1990, Horror, Alex Vincent  
**TUESDAY, DEC. 10**  
 9:00 p.m. *Child's Play* 3 1991, Horror, Justin Whalen  
 1:00 a.m. *Child's Play* 3 1991, Horror, Justin Whalen

**WEDNESDAY, DEC. 11**  
 9:00 p.m. *Demonic Toys* 1991, Horror, Tracy Scoggins  
 1:00 a.m. *Demonic Toys* 1991, Horror, Tracy Scoggins

**THURSDAY, DEC. 12**  
 9:00 p.m. *Dollman vs. Demonic Toys* 1993, Science Fiction, Tim Thomerson, Tracy Scoggins  
 1:00 a.m. *Dollman vs. Demonic Toys* 1993, Science Fiction, Tim Thomerson, Tracy Scoggins

**FRIDAY, DEC. 13**  
 7:00 p.m. *Master of Fantasy*

**SATURDAY, DEC. 14**  
 9:00 a.m. *Lilly C.A.T.* Science Fiction  
 1:30 p.m. *Masters of Fantasy* 2:00 p.m. *Return of the Fly* 1959, Horror, Vincent Price  
 4:00 p.m. *Curse of the Fly* 1965, Science Fiction, Brian Donlevy, Carole Grey  
 6:00 p.m. *Masters of Fantasy* 8:00 p.m. *Cold Equations* 1996, Science Fiction, Bill Campbell  
 12:00 p.m. *Cold Equations* 1996, Science Fiction, Bill Campbell  
 4:00 a.m. *Murder in the Zoo* 1933, Horror, Lionel Atwill

**SUNDAY, DEC. 15**  
 3:00 p.m. *Island of Lost Souls* 1933, Horror, Charles Laughton, Bela Lugosi  
 4:30 p.m. *Cold Equations* 1996, Science Fiction, Bill Campbell

8:00 p.m. *Masters of Fantasy*  
**MONDAY, DEC. 16**  
 7:30 p.m. *Masters of Fantasy* 11:30 p.m. *Masters of Fantasy*



Return of the Jedi: Classic Features goes behind the scenes of the Star Wars film.

**SATURDAY, DEC. 21**  
 9:00 a.m. *Robot Carnival* Science Fiction  
 2:00 p.m. *Frankenstein: The College Years* 1991, Science Fiction, William Ragsdale  
 4:00 p.m. *Cold Equations* 1996, Science Fiction  
 8:00 p.m. *Evolver* 1995, Science Fiction, John Delancie  
 12:00 a.m. *Evolver* 1995, Science Fiction, John Delancie  
 3:30 a.m. *Quintet* 1979, Science Fiction, Paul Newman, Bibi Anderson

**SUNDAY, DEC. 22**  
 3:00 p.m. *The Wolfman* 1941, Horror, Lon Chaney, Jr., Evelyn Ankers  
 4:30 p.m. *Evolver* 1995, Science Fiction, John Delancie

**MONDAY, DEC. 23**  
 9:00 a.m. *This Island Earth* 1955, Science Fiction, Jeff Morrow, Faith Domergue  
 11:00 a.m. *Return of the Fly* 1959, Horror, Vincent Price  
 1:00 p.m. *Curse of the Fly* 1965, Science Fiction, Brian Donlevy, Carole Grey  
 3:00 p.m. *Colossus: The Forbin Project* 1970, Science Fiction, Eric Braeden, Susan Clark  
 5:00 p.m. *Iceman* 1983, Science Fiction, Timothy Hutton, John Lone  
 7:00 p.m. *Firestarter* 1984, Horror, George C. Scott, Drew Barrymore  
 9:00 p.m. *Cat People*

1982, Horror, Nastassja Kinski, Malcolm McDowell  
 11:00 p.m. *Netherworld* 1991, Horror, Michael Bendetti, Denise Gentile  
 1:00 a.m. *My Demon Lover* 1987, Horror, Scott Valentine

**TUESDAY, DEC. 24**  
 9:00 a.m. *Human Feelings* 1978, Fantasy, Billy Crystal  
 11:00 a.m. *Project X* 1967, Science Fiction, Christopher George  
 1:00 p.m. *The Omegas* 1968, Science Fiction, Keith Larsen, Ingrid Pitt  
 3:00 p.m. *Dinosaur* 1960, Science Fiction, Ward Ramsey, Paul Lukather  
 5:00 p.m. *George's Island* 1991, Fantasy, Ian Bannen  
 7:00 p.m. *Biggles: Adventures in Time* 1985, Fantasy, Neil Dickson  
 9:00 p.m. *The Guyver* 1991, Science Fiction, Mark Hamill, Vivian Wu  
 11:00 p.m. *Silent Running* 1972, Science Fiction, Bruce Dern, Cliff Potts  
 1:00 a.m. *The Navigator: A Medieval Odyssey* Science Fiction

**WEDNESDAY, DEC. 25**  
 9:00 a.m. *Mothra* 1962, Science Fiction, Hiroshi Koizumi  
 11:00 a.m. *Fantastic Voyage* 1966, Science Fiction, Stephen Boyd, Raquel Welch  
 1:00 p.m. *It Came From Beneath the Sea* 1955, Science Fiction, Kenneth Tobey, Faith Domergue  
 3:00 p.m. *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* 1958, Science Fiction, Hugh Marlowe, John Taylor  
 5:00 p.m. *Twenty Million Miles to Earth* 1957, Science Fiction, William Hopper, Joan Taylor

7:00 p.m. *Critters* 1986, Science Fiction, Dee Wallace Stone, Scott Grimes  
 9:00 p.m. *Critters* 4 1991, Science Fiction, Brad Dourif, Angela Bassett  
 11:00 p.m. *King Kong vs. Godzilla* 1963, Science Fiction  
 1:00 a.m. *Zardoz* 1974, Science Fiction, Sean Connery, Charlotte Rampling

**THURSDAY, DEC. 26**  
 9:00 a.m. *The Space Children* 1958, Science Fiction, Adam Williams, Peggy Webber  
 10:30 a.m. *Last Child* 1971, Science Fiction, Michael Olet, Janet Margolin  
 12:00 p.m. *The Termonauts* 1967, Science Fiction, Simon Oates, Zena Marshall  
 1:30 p.m. *Night Slaves* 1970, Science Fiction, James Franciscus, Lee Grant  
 3:00 p.m. *Night Gallery* (Pilot) 1969, Supernatural, Roddy

McDowell, Joan Crawford  
 5:00 p.m. *Captain Kronos: Vampire Hunter* 1974, Horror, Horst Janson, John Carson  
 7:00 p.m. *Dracula* 1979, Horror, Frank Langella, Laurence Oliver  
 9:30 p.m. *Satan's Triangle* 1975, Horror, Kim Novak, Doug McClure  
 11:00 p.m. *Horror Planet* 1981, Horror, Judy Geeson, Stephanie Beacham  
 1:00 a.m. *Phantasm* 1979, Horror, Michael Baldwin, Angus Scrimm  
 3:00 a.m. *A Grey Matter Comedy*

**FRIDAY, DEC. 27**  
 9:00 a.m. *Conquest of Space* 1955, Science Fiction, Eric Fleming, Walter Brooke  
 11:00 a.m. *Man Without a Body* 1958, Science Fiction, Robert Hutton  
 1:00 p.m. *The Skull* 1965, Horror, Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing  
 3:00 p.m. *Critters* 4 1991, Science Fiction, Brad Dourif, Angela Bassett  
 5:00 p.m. *The Devonsville Terror* 1983, Horror, Donald Pleasence, Suzanne Love  
 7:00 p.m. *Not of This World* 1991, Science Fiction, Lisa Hartman, A. Martinez  
 9:00 p.m. *The Sender* 1982, Horror, Kathryn Harrold, Zalko Ivanek  
 11:00 p.m. *Abraxas: Guardian of the Universe* Science Fiction, Jesse Ventura  
 1:00 a.m. *Parasite* 1982, Science Fiction, Demi Moore, Robert Glaudini  
 3:00 a.m. *Hi Honey, I'm Dead* 1991, Comedy, Catherine Hicks  
 5:00 a.m. *The Utilizer* 1995, Science Fiction

**SATURDAY, DEC. 28**  
 9:00 a.m. *Demon City* Shinjuku Science Fiction  
 2:00 p.m. *Soulaker* 1990, Supernatural, Joe Estevez, Vivian Schilling  
 4:00 p.m. *Evolver* 1995, Science Fiction, John Delancie  
 8:00 p.m. *Stephen King's Silver Bullet* 1985, Horror, Gary Busey, Everett McGill  
 12:00 a.m. *Stephen King's Silver Bullet* 1985, Horror, Gary Busey, Everett McGill  
 4:00 a.m. *The Tower* 1985, Science Fiction, Ray Paisley, Jackie Wray

**SUNDAY, DEC. 29**  
 3:00 p.m. *The Mummy* 1932, Horror, Boris Karloff, Zita Johann  
 4:30 p.m. *The Tower* 1985, Science Fiction, Ray Paisley, Jackie Wray

## FTL NEWSFEED

**F**TL (Faster Than Light) Newsfeed is the Sci-Fi Channel's fictional news feature from 150 years in the future.

A sixty-second daily interstitial news update, it is one of the many information and entertainment services provided by Commlink, the total communications system of the year 2145. Transmitted from an orbiting space station, FTL Newsfeed is set in a virtual

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**STAR TREK MOVIES**  
 Continued from page 68  
 Buttrick) on Kirk's desk, and forward to TNG as well. Plus a sense of closure, as the *Enterprise's* final, really final voyage.  
 Overall Score: 35/60. A high note to go out on.  
**Star Trek: Generations**  
 Vital Stats: Released 1994; Director: David Carson.  
 Historical Matrix: With the end of highly successful TNG series, it was natural that a feature film would follow. It was thought that the inclusion of Kirk would lend excitement and fan interest, and gradually the movie morphed to more of a Kirk story than a TNG story.  
 SFX: 8/10. Very good, especially the "space ribbon" of the Nexus. The crash of the *Enterprise* has, shall we say, visceral impact.  
 Characters: 5/10. Only a few parts are allowed to shine out of an ensemble show: Picard, Data, and to a limited extent La Forge. Kirk is Kirk, but without Spock and McCoy for balance.  
 Drama: 5/10. There's a real sense of loss in the early scenes, where Kirk goes to a heroic (first) death, and then interesting scenes of bereavement (Picard) and fear (Data). But Dr. Soran (Malcolm McDowell) doesn't develop enough, and Picard too easily convinces Kirk to leave Paradise. The second fight on the catwalks seems anti-climactic, despite Shatner's death scene.

Humor: 4/10. When Brent Spiner (Data) is discovering the emotion of humor, it's not boring. But the jokes seem oddly out of step. No *Voyage Home*, this.  
 Sense of Wonder: 5/10. An awe deficit, despite the breathtaking space ribbon, and you can't beat blowing up solar systems, or crashing a spaceship for excitement.  
 Continuity: 5/10. We have the NCC-1701-B, and Kirk handing over the reins to the new movie cast. But save for Data's emotion chip, and Picard's family loss, there aren't many new developments, or old references.  
 Overall Score: 32/60. This lacks because it centers around the Death of Kirk rather than the TNG cast. Not the dud that TMP was, or an uneven *Frontier*, but compare it with the heights that this cast and these creators have hit in their syndicated series!  
 And now these seven are about to be joined by another, for *Star Trek: First Contact* will be out shortly, the eighth installment in this series. It will be the first without any of the original cast along for the ride. How it will fare when compared to those released to date? The signs look good for another enjoyable entry. *Star Trek* is a franchise as good as the creators chosen by Paramount make it — and past experience suggests they will, on the whole, continue to choose well. □

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## STAR TREK: 1ST CONTACT

Continued from page 65

more carefully attended to. Your fit and finish, and your attention to all the subtleties of design, have to be much more carefully drawn for a feature than they have to be for a TV show."

Similarly, there's a different dynamic between writing for television and writing for film. Braga is in the perfect position to understand those differences; after all, Braga has been with *Star Trek: The Next Generation* since 1990. "The main difference, of course, is scope. You have a much bigger budget, you can do sequences differently, and you can have a lot more sets and characters. The metaphor I always use is that, when I wrote for *The Next Generation* television episodes, it was like living with your family. Now, it's like visiting your family at Christmas every couple of years. When you make that visit, you want it to be more special, and you want it to be bigger. You want to take bigger risks with the characters, since you know you're only going to see them every couple of years.

"We never would have given Data an emotion chip in the series, because that would have ended his quest to be more human. But when you're in a movie situation, you've got to do more things like that. You've got to make the stakes bigger," explains Braga. "It's a different kind of storytelling in that regard. For instance, on the television show, we very, very rarely, almost never, put humanity at stake, or even the Earth at stake. Because, if you do that week after week, it's like crying wolf, it's like where do you go from there." But in *First Contact*, we put Earth at stake, because you need bigger stakes in a movie, with a cast of characters you're only going to see every couple of years. The storytelling becomes broader and bigger in a movie, than on a weekly television show."

As much as *Star Trek: The Next Generation* has gained in its move from television to film, there's also a definite loss. "I think it loses a little of its intimacy," Braga admits cautiously. "I think that on a weekly basis, the TV show's much more character-driven, and frankly, not all of the characters are going to be serviced as well in the films. Compared to Data's role, unfortunately, Dr. Crusher's role is thinner, as is Troi's role and Geordi's role and certain other characters' roles. But that's because in a two-hour movie, it's a lot different than 26 hours of a television season. You don't have the time to service all of the characters as much as you'd really like to."

Another thing that is lost is the subtle continuity of the characters' interrelationship. "You've got to be very cautious about dipping into TV lore in movies that are based on television shows because you've got to assume that most of your audience hasn't seen, for example, the

episodes where Worf and Troi were involved," notes Braga, alluding to the budding relationship that was implicated between these two characters toward the end of season seven. "Even fans of TNG may not have seen these episodes. So if you base a movie on that, you're on dangerous ground. You want people to go into those movies and see something all new."

"This is a critical year for all of *Star Trek*," notes Braga tentatively. "*Star Trek* has never been as exposed as it is and will be this year in particular, with the anniversary. I'm just hoping people won't just get totally sick of it. Will *First Contact* reinvigorate the interest in *Star Trek*? I don't think there's anything to reinvigorate; the most we can hope for is that it gets more people into it."

The stakes are high for *First Contact*: not only is it the first solo effort of *The Next Generation* cast, but its release also caps off a year that has both celebrated *Star Trek*'s 30th anniversary (don't miss this issue's *Channel News* department to see how the Sci-Fi Channel is celebrating), and seen a decline in viewership for *Trek* series like *Deep Space Nine* and *Voyager*. But, as Braga is quick to note, "Every movie that's ever made has great stakes. Absolutely. I think the last movie probably had greater stakes. Of course, I'm very nervous, very nervous. I want this movie to do well, as does everyone who's involved with it."

It's no secret that *Trek* legend proposes that the best *Star Trek* films are those with even-numbered designations. When asked whether he gives any credence to this belief, Braga answers, "At the moment, I have great faith. I'm praying that it's true." □

## CHANNEL NEWS

Continued from page 12

*Gump*-style computer technology — travels through time and space and appears in the original *Star Trek* episode *The Trouble With Tribbles*. (You remember tribbles — those fuzzy little creatures that multiply like crazy.) Sci-Fi will explore the wizardry behind-the-scenes on *The Making of Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* "Trials and Tribble-ations", which airs in the US on Saturday, Nov. 2 at 6:30PM ET\*; Sunday, Nov. 3 at 8PM ET\*; Monday, Nov. 4 at 5PM ET\*, 7:30PM ET\*, and 11:30PM ET\*; Thursday, Nov. 7 at 7:30PM ET\* and 11:30PM ET\*; and Saturday, Nov. 9 at 1PM ET\*.

The *Star Trek* anniversary celebrations continue with *Trek Fest*, which takes over the airwaves on Thanksgiving Day in the US. Three *Star Trek* movies will be shown in widescreen letterbox format. Mr. Spock himself, Leonard Nimoy, provides commentary throughout the evening. *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* airs at 3PM ET\*; *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* at 6PM ET\*; and *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier* at 9PM ET\*. Enjoy the holidays, and tune in next year! \*All times listed are Eastern. □

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## The Series Collection

### The Immortal

**O**N THE OLD TV FARCE, ROWAN and Martin's Laugh-In, one of Judy Carne's giddy jokes surely fell flat for the creators of a certain sci-fi show: "You know, that ABC is crazy! They gave us a show called *The Immortal*. Thirteen weeks later, it died!"

But sometimes the shows that die the fastest death garner the strongest fans. For though the show that premiered September 24, 1970 died a quick death on September 8, 1971, even today it threatens to return to life.

Each month on the Sci-Fi Channel in the United States, the Sci-Fi Series Collection showcases unforgettable favorites from the genres of science fiction, fantasy and horror. This month, the spotlight shines on a little seen gem called *The Immortal*.

A 1969 ABC Movie of the Week introduced us all to test car driver Ben Richards, played by actor Christopher George, whose blood has the power to make others live forever. But to find the true genesis of the series, we must go all the way back to 1962, to a science fiction novel by James Gunn titled *The Immortals*.

Gunn, a professor of English at the University of Kansas, an SF writer (whose short stories have appeared in our companion magazine *Science Fiction Age* and elsewhere), and a historian, told a story with more grit and less glamour than eventually appeared on the home screen.

Gunn's novel tells of a drifter about whom a startling discovery is made once he sells some of his blood to a hospital in order to buy alcohol. It is soon discovered that some strange quality of his blood not only carries an immunity to all diseases, but also restores the youth of the lucky donee. Gunn spent most of his novel examining how this medical miracle could change society, and looked closely at how this blood, when synthesized and distributed widely, could transform society. The move from words to pictures changed this focus.

A popular TV subgenre of the time was the action-adventure chase series, such as *The Fugitive*, where David Janssen fled to prove his innocence, or *Run For Your Life*, where a Ben Gazzara played a dying man who sought to fill his remaining hours with excitement, and screenwriter Robert Specht used the novel's premise to create a chilling addition to the list.

When Richards' donated blood saves the life of a dying tycoon played by veteran actor Barry Sullivan, the multi-millionaire decides to use all force of his great wealth and power to imprison Richards in his secluded man-



Ben Richards (Christopher George), "the Immortal," shares his life-giving blood with a tragically ill young girl (Lori Busk).

sion to he can continue getting the life-saving transfusions.

Richards manages to escape, and the movie ended with him beginning a hunt for his missing brother, as well as for an answer to question, what does an immortal do? The film proved so successful that it was immediately signed up for a regular series.

By the time the series rolled around on Thursday nights in the Fall of 1970, Christopher George (at the time most widely known for playing Sam Troy on the popular *Rat Patrol* TV series) returned, but Barry Sullivan moved on, to be replaced by a different elderly rich man, Arthur Maitland, played by David Brian. Brian stayed in the background as a menacing presence, and only appeared in two of the series' fifteen episodes. Acting as Maitland's right hand man and primary leader of the chase was Fletcher, played by actor Don Knight.

Trying to stay one step ahead of Maitland's men, Richards ran into a wide range of guest stars, such as Sal Mineo, Howard Duff, Lee Meriwether, Vic Morrow, Ross Martin, Jack Albertson and Ted Knight. Carol Lynley played Sylvia, the fiancée with which Richards wishes to be reunited, but which fate keeps apart.

After far too short a time, the running stopped. Though the number of episodes can be counted on the fingers of three hands (somehow appropriate for a science fiction show), many viewers still have fond memories of the promising series, and rumors of a possible future film still surface from time to time.

Meanwhile, American viewers can satisfy their curiosity today. Check the listing that can be found elsewhere in this issue for day and show time in your area. ☐

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Dear *Sci-Fi Entertainment*:

I loved your large color spread on *The Phantom* in the June issue. What a film! Great action and stunts, good acting, breath-taking scenery, and Treat Williams! Williams steals the picture. Here's an actor who's done it all and proves it over and over again.

I saw the film three times. It's the most fun I had all summer!

Sincerely,  
Charles Finley

Dear Mr. Flixman:

I adamantly agree with your August editorial about the V-chip. How a parent could even consider having the government, with its reputation, as a "baby sitter" is beyond me. I am so tired of hearing the "no-noes" of the week and the disease of the month!

My favorite quote by Henry Notten (16th-17th century England) is:

"Plots are necessary to maintain a politician's reputation."

"The best way for a Government to gain approval for unpopular or even impossible measures was to stir up public indignation against any party opposed to the Government."

Most sincerely,  
Mrs. Celeste M. Jeffries

Dear Editor:

Thank you so much for the article about the return of *Doctor Who*. I thought I had seen the last of this fantastic British creation years ago when PBS quit showing it. Oh, well, I thought, is there life after *Doctor Who*?

I guess I'm more than just a fan of this science fiction classic. I'm what they call a dyed-in-the-wool whovian. There's only one word for how it affects you -- magical. The funny quirks of

each Doctor, the almost vaudevillian talent of some, made the unexpected twists and turns of each episode a constant delight. I often found certain shows so absorbing that I felt sucked into them, as if I were right there in the Tardis partaking of the adventure.

A common joke at work was, "Don't do drugs. Just do *Who*. *Doctor Who*."

Of course, that was a long time ago, and as clever as the story-telling was was what the show lacked in special effects. Not so in the new *Doctor Who* movie. Wow! What a show! It was beautifully put together; a real piece of art. Paul McGann's performance as the Doctor was excellent, especially the way he slowly transformed from a lost amnesiac to a wise time lord in complete control.

Please keep us informed on all developments concerning the new series. Thanks again.

Patti Guernsey

Dear Editor:

After reading your last issue's article on the new movie *Escape From L.A.*, I just want John Carpenter to know that not everyone hated *The Thing* when it first came out. I've always been a big fan of his movies and *The Thing* was one of the best movies he's ever done, in my opinion.

Who were the fans, audiences, and critics who hated it?

Of course, not all of us have dark tastes, but those of us who do: we salute you, John Carpenter. Now that this movie has been recognized as one of the best "Top Ten" movies ever made, I hope John realizes that all good things come in time.

Sincerely,  
Denise Rodgers

Dear Editor:

Thank you for your various articles on the film *The Phantom*. It hasn't had a commercial following as it should have in the Hollywood arena only because there wasn't a huge star's name carrying the picture.

Instead, there was a well-adjusted, gifted actor, Billy Zane, whose *Phantom* shoes cannot be filled by another, and whose physique made the *Phantom* a believable character. He is terribly charming with a glimmer in his eyes showing that he truly loved being the masked hero.

I only hope that he will be the *Phantom* in the two upcoming sequels, as I cannot fathom any

other actor in his place.

Thanks you, Mr. Simon Wincer, for believing and giving Mr. Billy Zane his chance to prove to Hollywood he really is an actor's actor, as he already has proven this to me and a million other women!

Sincerely phantomed,  
Gina Mavroudis

Dear Editor:

After enduring wave after wave of DVD hype, your recent article on the subject finally prompted me to write. Not one article on DVD has addressed the taping issue. Most of the time, my VCR is used to tape shows for later viewing. I really don't care if DVD picture quality is a million times better than video. I'm not willing to lose the taping option to gain better screen quality.

Will DVD allow me to use a disc as I currently use tape, recording *Dark Shadows* and *Battlestar Galactica* while I'm at work? If not, I'll pass. The VCR lets me use a cheap tape to watch what I want, when I want. Since I learned how to program, 80% of my VCR use is home taping as opposed to 20% watching of store bought movies.

Like many other aspects of the so-called "information revolution," DVD comes with many pricey strings attached. How many people have the means to:

- 1) Buy as digital TV?
  - 2) Buy a DVD player?
  - 3) Replace all their videocassettes with DVD?
  - 4) Lose the option to retape over old shows, saving money by reusing old tapes?
- My pockets are not that deep, and until someone states what the situation is with the ability of DVD to tape off the TV and be re-used to tape again, my VCR stays right where it is. Would someone please answer this question?

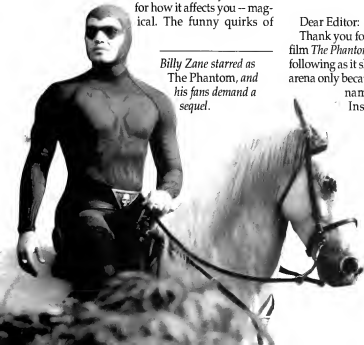
Until DVD possesses the same taping and re-taping abilities of the videotape, pardon my reluctance to jump on the DVD bandwagon.

Sincerely,  
Ann L. Laabs

DVD should allow you to tape and retape your favorite shows. What is holding up the commercially availability of DVD is more politics than technology, for the industry has yet to resolve all of the copyright issues surrounding the new system. Keep your fingers crossed, and be patient.

We often cannot reply to our mail personally, but by all means write to Sci-Fi Entertainment, 441 Carlisle Drive, Herndon, VA 22070. E-mail has a better chance of receiving a reply; reach us at 75663.2701@compuserve.com. Be sure to visit the Dominion at <http://www.sci-fi.com>.

Billy Zane starred as The Phantom, and his fans demand a sequel.



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## The Sci-Fi Channel Presents Sightings, and Star Trek Celebrates the Big 3-0

**P**SYCHIC DETECTIVES. GHOSTLY ENCOUNTERS. UFO's. Vampires. They're all a part of the paranormal world of *Sightings*, the popular series produced by Henry Winkler, now seen exclusively on the Sci-Fi Channel in the US and Europe, with all-new original episodes. On each installment of this hour-long show, award-winning anchor Tim White hosts investigations of unexplained occurrences from all over the

globe. Carefully researched stories including eyewitness interviews, dramatic reconstructions and in-depth investigations are presented factually, allowing you to draw your own conclusions.

Host Tim White was recently in the UK taping some

*Sightings* has launched a website on *The Dominion*. It features three main stories from the series, with updates and all the latest scoop on topics ranging from crop circles and psychic detectives, to UFOs and ghostly encounters. The address is <http://www.scifi.com/sightings>. Fans of *Mystery Science Theater 3000* have a lot to be happy about lately. MST3K has found a new home on the Sci-Fi Channel, and will begin airing in early '97 in the U.S. (and the UK). There's also a new site on the Internet — the web area can be accessed by its own URL or as part of *The Dominion*. The producers of MST3K have helped create the site, which features a note from robot Tom Servo (voiced by actor Kevin Murphy), a link to press releases about the show and answers to frequently asked questions. And there's a scrapbook from the recent second annual MST3K convention from Minneapolis, ConventionCon ExpoFest-A-Rama. As if that's not enough, there's a 3-D rendering of robot character Crow, and an MST3K screen saver. The addresses are <http://www.scifi.com/mst3000> or <http://www.mst3000.com>.

The Sci-Fi Channel, Paramount Pictures and Spencer Gifts are celebrating 30 years of *Star Trek* with an awesome sweepstakes open to US viewers: the "Sci-Fi Channel's *Star Trek: First Contact* Sweepstakes." Enter now for a chance to win incredible prizes! One Grand Prize Winner will win a trip for four to the grand opening of *Star Trek: The Experience*, a new attraction at the Las Vegas Hilton opening in the spring of 1997. The trip will include round-trip airfare, two rooms for three nights at the Las Vegas Hilton and four tickets to *Star Trek: The Experience*. One First Prize Winner will receive an Official 30th Anniversary *Star Trek* MasterCard with \$5,000 in pre-paid credit. Plus, one Second Prize Winner will attend a personal screening of all eight *Star Trek* films with up to 200 guests! To enter, tune into the Sci-Fi Channel in the US for sweepstakes details, or visit a Spencer Gifts store near you.

In honor of three decades of *Star Trek*, the Sci-Fi Channel is airing a unique "Making of" special in November in the US focusing on an upcoming special episode of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* called "Trials and Tribble-ations." In this episode, the *DS9* crew — thanks to "Forrest

*Continued on page 104*



**RIGHT:** Odo (René Auberjonois) and Quark (Armin Shimerman) will be having their own anniversary celebration. **BELOW:** Tim White reports on the paranormal in *Sightings*.

upcoming episodes. He and the *Sightings* crew were investigating the strange case of a haunted pub in Avebury, Wiltshire. There have been numerous reports of a ghostly spectre in and around the pub, the site of adultery and a vicious murder in the 1600's. While in the UK, the *Sightings* crew traveled extensively, interviewing experts in UFO's, the paranormal, and the ancient world, as well as visiting the ancient stone circle at Stonehenge.

*Sightings* can be seen in the U.S. Fridays at 8PM ET\* and 12AM ET\*, Saturdays at 10PM ET\* and 2AM ET\*, and Sundays at 2PM ET\*. In the UK, *Sightings* airs Mondays at 2200.





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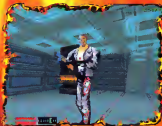


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## Lucas and Spielberg continue to create the hottest news in the sci-fi galaxy.

BY BOB MARTIN

**O**N SEPTEMBER 6, Lucasfilm announced the official start of preproduction on the new *Star Wars* film. "Episode One" of the series is planned to start filming at Great Britain's Leavesden Studios in fall of 1997, approximately six months after the twentieth anniversary of the original film's release.

Leavesden, Britain's newest studio, will also be its largest when construction is complete.

No confirmation has yet emerged from Lucasfilm regarding the rapidly-proliferating casting rumors. George Lucas' second trilogy of *Star Wars* films will recount the fall of the Republic and its defenders, the Jedi Knights. Though no storyline is confirmed, it's expected

will remain the all-time world box office champ—at least until the next challenge arises, presumably the new version of *Star Wars* with refurbished effects, planned for release in May, 1997, which held the top spot for a number of years before Spielberg's *E.T.: The Extraterrestrial* became king of the hill.

Though the rivalry is a friendly one, Spielberg no doubt hopes that the next real contender will be his own *The Lost World*, the *Jurassic Park* sequel that is scheduled to complete principal photography in Humboldt County, CA as this issue reaches the newsstands. The staff of Industrial Light & Magic is already deeply into the film's dino effects, planned to go far beyond the original. ILM, well-known for its near-religious commitment to meeting even the tightest schedule, has quite a chore before it, with the film penciled in for a Summer 1997 release.

Spielberg has never been a layabout, but recent weeks have been a wild ride indeed. While mounting the lavish effects-filled sequel, the director and his partners Jeffrey Katzenberg and David Geffen have been suffering birth-pangs for what is certainly a dream project, though it must, at times, seem a nightmare—the transformation of the giant airplane hangar that once housed Howard Hughes' "Spruce Goose" experimental cargo plane, situated in the wetlands of the Ballona Valley in western L.A. just outside of Marina Del Rey, into what everyone expects will be the most exciting of the major Hollywood studios.

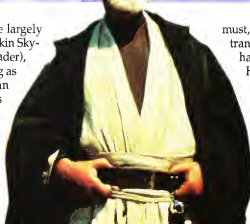
Headaches began with the groundbreaking. A small legion



The next *Star Wars* movie will take us to a time long before Darth Vader built his Death Star (above) or Obi-Wan (right) used The Force.

that the initial film will be largely concerned with young Anakin Skywalker (the future Darth Vader), his recruitment and training as a Jedi Knight by Obi-Wan Kenobi, and the beginnings of the Empire.

Despite a threat posed by the early momentum of *Independence Day*, recent figures indicate that Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*





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Director Paul Verhoeven is hard at work on the \$80 million production of *Starship Troopers* (above), based on Robert A. Heinlein's Hugo-winning novel. Hollywood insiders, who have been hoping for a big screen adaptation of this classic work of alien warfare for decades, inform us that the film delivers the sci-fi goods. An unconfirmed report from the set of *Starship Troopers* indicates that the Disney/Columbia coproduction will offer lots of opportunities for the toy companies to make collectors salivate, with a variety of alien "bugs," including a "queen bug" and "brain bug," that perform reproductive and control functions, as well as heavy-armor "tanker bugs," clawed "warrior bugs," "breeder bugs" and an undetermined number of other varieties. Hopefully, Phil Tippett's computer models will be made available to the licensees for perfectly-detailed reproduction.

of local environmentalists banded together to protest the living and working community that will be known as "Playa Vista," planned to accommodate DreamWorks and the other high-tech corporations (Digital Domain, GTE, IBM, a new multimedia branch of UCLA, and Silicon Graphics) that will occupy the \$750 million grounds. The controversy has split California environmentalists. DreamWorks and its development partners are working with several, including the Sierra Club, to find ways to diminish the project's impact on the environment.

Some of the "green" features already in the package include low-emission transport between Playa Vista's seven residential neighborhoods and its work areas. It is also promised that over half of the 1,000-acre project will be devoted to a wetlands preserve. Despite such concessions, the Ballona Valley Preservation Society is working hard to stop the development, mainly by persuading the people of the nearby town of Marina Del Rey to reject the package of \$85 million in tax breaks promised to the project. It is estimated that the complex will bring in over \$5 billion in business to the area by the year 2000.

With that sort of money at risk, what's a lousy \$4 million between friends? That's how much CBS and DreamWorks lost when the first four episodes of *Ink*, the new sitcom

starring real-life husband-and-wife Ted Danson and Mary Steenbergen — and DreamWorks' first TV series effort — failed to meet expectations and were abandoned. The series was retooled, and its debut pushed back several weeks.

As these two stories were reaping negative headlines in Los Angeles newspapers, Spielberg's best friend in the press, Claudia Eller of the *LA Times*, delivered a glowing and news-heavy report on the future plans of DreamWorks' film division, providing the first detailed picture of DreamWorks' plans for its first couple of years. In the following capsules, information on the SF and fantasy projects has been expanded from our own sources. As director, Spielberg has a ten-year contract with DreamWorks, and five potential feature projects already lined up. Intriguingly, one of these is referred to only as "a secret project," with no hint as to its nature. The other four are:

*Saving Private Ryan*, a World War II drama starring Tom Hanks: The plot concerns a team of soldiers in a high-risk mission to save a private trapped behind enemy lines. Originally a Paramount project, this became a DreamWorks-Paramount coproduction with Spielberg's involvement. Spielberg is supervising rewrites, with start of production expected in June of 1997.

*Mutiny*, a script brought to Spielberg by Debbie Allen, the singer, actress and dancer, who will serve as producer on the project. The film will tell the true story of the slave ship *Amistad*, where 47 African slaves mutinied in 1839. All the ship's human cargo were killed, except for two African men who subsequently stood trial for murder. This was originally planned to start in February as Spielberg's first DreamWorks film, but the need to grab Tom Hanks between commitments for *Saving Private Ryan* moved that project up.

*Deep Impact*, combining elements of two books, Phillip Wylie and Ed Balmer's *When Worlds Collide* (previously filmed by George Pal at Paramount) and Arthur C. Clarke's *Hammer of God*, was first announced a year ago — well before the new trend toward disaster films began, but its story of the discovery of a comet on a collision course with Earth should fit in nicely. Michael Tolkin (*The Player*) has completed a first draft. The project, to be co-produced by Paramount, Universal, and DreamWorks, will re-unite Spielberg with jaws producers Richard Zanuck and David Brown.

*The Newports* (a new title is expected) is a romance based on the true story of two autistic adults who meet and fall in love. Screenwriter Ron Bass, who first explored autism in *Rain Man*, is currently wrestling with the challenge of a far more intimate view of the condition.

Non-Spielberg projects include *The Peacemaker*, now in postproduction for a Fall, 1997 release. The action drama about the potential dangers of the nuclear arsenal built by the Soviet regime, now under no single nation's control, stars George Clooney and Nicole Kidman and is the first feature from Mimi Leder, an Emmy-winning director of Amblin's *E.R.* TV series.

*Mouse Hunt*, from an original screenplay by Adam Rifkin (*The Chase*), is a comedy about two greedy brothers who inherit a valuable historic mansion and attempt to displace its sole tenant, a remarkably intelligent mouse with a flair for sadism. (Picture *Home Alone* with a computer-graphic rodent instead of Macaulay Culkin.) Gore Verbinsky, whose television commercials for Nike and Budweiser have gotten major notice, makes his feature debut. Nathan Lane of *The Birdcage* has been cast in a lead role, and shooting is expected to start by the end of 1996.

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by Bruce Robinson (writer-director of *Withnail and I*) and to be directed by Neil Jordan (*Company of Wolves*, *Interview With the Vampire*). An early 1997 start date is planned.

*Keeper*, with nods to *Babe* and to *Dr. Doolittle*, is a comedy about a zookeeper with a special affinity with his animals and their effort to stop city authorities who wish to replace the zoo with a museum. This one is expected to start in early 1997.

*Cat in the Hat*, from the book by Dr. Seuss, is being adapted for *Forrest Gump* screenwriter Eric Roth. Tim Allen (*Toy Story*, *The Santa Clause*) is being wooed to star as the man hounded by the chapeau'ed feline. Tentatively planned to start in Spring of 1997 for a Summer 1998 release.

*Neanderthal*, from John Darnott's Pulitzer-winning book about paleontologists who discover an isolated tribe of the formerly-extinct hominids in remote Siberia, will feature critters by Digital Domain's Stan Winston. A mid-97 start is expected.

After *Man* is inspired by Dougal Dixon's 1981 illustrated book. Though Dixon is best known for the scientific accuracy of his dinosaur illustrations, this particular book is being developed as the "flip side" of *Jurassic Park*. The book was Dixon's "scientific whimsy" — a collection of text and illustrations showing the possible future evolution of various Earth species. The plot being developed around Dixon's illustrations concerns a space traveler who, courtesy of the space-time continuum, returns to Earth considerably later than expected, and finds life at home quite different than he remembers. Lengthy development of visual concepts is underway, with shooting planned for late 1997.

*Arkansas* concerns a tenant farmer who makes a desperate bid for independence from his landlord — despite the landlord's determination to see the former sharecropper fail. Planned to start sometime in 1997.

Meanwhile, the DreamWorks animation studio is in midproduction on their first feature, *The Prince of Egypt*, an adaptation of the life of Moses and his delivery of his people from Egyptian slavery. Brenda Chapman, a former Disneyite, and Simon Wells, from the Don Bluth studio, are directing. Doug Ikeler, who provided animated mouths for *Babe*, is providing computerized effects animation. The star-heavy voice cast includes Mel Brooks, Sandra Bullock, Ralph Fiennes, Jeff Goldblum, Val Kilmer, Steve Martin, Michelle Pfeiffer, Martin Short, and Patrick Stewart.

Another animated project is *Ants*, this one

to be realized by the staff of Pacific Data Images (40% owned by DreamWorks). The digital imaging studio's previous feature work includes the aliens for last spring's *The Arrival*, and numerous digital distortions for Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers*. The storyline has to do with one ant's dissatisfaction with the regimented lifestyle of his fellows. Industry observers say that this project is a special concern of DreamWorks honcho Jeffrey Katzenberg, the former Disney head who is now suing his former studio for millions in bonus pay he claims to be owed. It's interesting to note that Disney's follow-up to *Toy Story* is a computer-animated Pixar Studio film entitled *Bugs*. Both creepy-crawlers are targeted for a 1998 release.

Spielberg is said to be very "hands-on" in the development of *Invasion: America*, an animated dramatic series planned for prime time showing on the WB network in late 1997.

The live action roster, and early development on the animated features, is under the stewardship of Walter Parkes and Laurie MacDonald, who started working in a similar capacity at Amblin' about two years ago. The husband-and-wife duo told the *Times* that the studio will pursue two kinds of projects — the "seasonal blockbuster" big-budget movies, and smaller-scale, sometimes controversial or even experimental films, designed to break in new talent at lower risk. What DreamWorks has announced it will avoid doing — at least during these first years — is making films just because there's a "good enough" script and a distribution schedule to fill. DreamWorks will only make

*Continued on page 24*



*Michael Crichton's best-selling dinosaur novel The Lost World (sequel to his Jurassic Park) is being adapted to film by Steven Spielberg for a 1997 release.*

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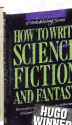
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Jay (Tommy Lee Jones) and Kay (Will Smith) are the top secret Men in Black, saving Earth from alien terrorists in this sci-fi action-comedy based on a cult comic book.

a film if the powers-that-be find a compelling reason to make it. DreamWorks also intends to continue Amblin's policy of avoiding scripts with exploitatively violent or extreme sexual content.

Which probably leaves out Quentin Tarantino, now preparing to shoot *Rum Punch*, adapted from Elmore Leonard's novel, possibly with Sylvester Stallone in the lead role. Though the young hotshot's scripts are unlikely to pass the DreamWorks "purity test," his first collaboration with Spielberg is now available for screening on CD-ROM. Entitled Steven Spielberg's *Director's Chair*, the interactive exercise in desktop filmmaking is likely to be the final product of Spielberg's long relationship with the "edutainment" software outfit Knowledge Adventure, as Spielberg's future new media efforts are far more likely to appear on the DreamWorks Interactive label, a partnership with Microsoft.

Despite his new loyalties, Spielberg was an enthusiastic participant in every phase of the disc's production, the folks at Knowledge Adventure tell us. *Director's Chair* definitively raises the bar for the level of talent employed in such enterprises, including costars Tarantino and Jennifer Aniston (though it'll take all your moviemaking skill to make a romance between these two believable), and filmmaking tips from such Spielberg-crew stalwarts as *Jurassic Park* cinematographer Dean Cundey and *Schindler's List* editor Michael Kahn, as well as advice from the man with his name above the title.

One of the first releases from DreamWorks Interactive will be a CD-ROM called *Ghost in the Machine*, written by Bryce Zabel, co-creator of *Dark Skies*. "I finally got a chance to meet Stephen Spielberg," says Zabel, who had previously developed an unsold UFO series for Amblin. "And it turns out, he's a lot of fun. He really liked the aspect of retelling human history in *Dark Skies*, so I got to do it

again for the CD-ROM. And this time I got to explain the meaning of death — always the big issues," he jokes. "When will I get to do a simple romantic comedy?"

In addition to their chores attending to the infant studio, Parkes and MacDonald are currently supervising postproduction on the final Amblin project, *Men in Black*, a sci-fi action-comedy adapted from the Lowell Cunningham comic book. Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones star as Jay and Kay, members of a top-secret organization established to police alien activity on Earth, who find themselves in the middle of the deadly plot by an intergalactic terrorist (Vincent D'Onofrio) assassinate two ambassadors from opposing galaxies; the MiB must track down the terrorist, prevent the collision of worlds and thereby prevent Earth from being engulfed in interstellar conflict.

On a recent set visit, director Barry Sonnenfeld (*Get Shorty*) talked to a press group that included our own Berthe Roegger. "The way the comedy in this film plays," he told us, "is that you have people talking to aliens, yet never acknowledging that they're alien. For instance, Tommy's interrogating this alien and the alien has all these excuses. He's jabbering in an alien tongue, and Tommy just says, 'yeah, that's enough, put up your hands and all your flippers right now.' The tone of the movie is not unlike *Addams Family* or even *Get Shorty*, in that the more you play it for the reality — the more you don't play it for laughs — the funnier it is.

"Tommy Lee Jones is unbelievably funny because he plays it so straight. Whenever I sense that Tommy thinks he's being funny I say, 'let's do one flatter, Tommy, even straighter.' And that's where he's funny.

"Will's funny because he's not the straight man. He's full of energy. He says he's the Dion Sandlers of the movie, always getting into trouble. So, it's a perfect pair.

"Though it's a huge kind of movie, it's

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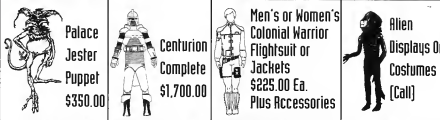
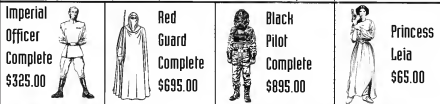
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been the most relaxed shoot I've ever been on. It helps that [Oscar-winning makeup guy] Rick Baker is incredibly professional, as is ILM, and Will Smith and Tommy have been great to work with. So, it's actually been very easy shoot. There is a lot of pressure, because there's a lot of money involved, and there's a lot of effects — so you've really got to think ahead of time about what you're gonna want in the cutting room nine months from now. That's sort of annoying, but overall it's been fun, actually."

Though MIB comes late in a cycle of alien visitor films that began with last year's *The Arrival* — and included another well-known Will Smith feature — Sonnenfeld says the competition doesn't phase him. "You have to pretend there are no other films coming out. I worked on *Big* as a cinematographer, and while we were shooting that, they were doing *18 Again*, *Vice Versa*, *Like Father Like Son* — all body-switching, adult/kid things. But *Big* was the breakout film. You just gotta forget about it. If the movie's good, it's good — no matter how many other alien movies there are."

Meanwhile, film and TV rights to Activision's recently released CD-ROM *Spycraft: The Great Game* have been optioned by Universal Studios, with Lawrence Gordon Productions (*Die Hard*, *Field of Dreams*) to spearhead development. Former CIA director: William Colby and ex-KGB chief Oleg Kalugin "consulted" (whatever that may mean) in the game's development.

Spielberg crony Michael Crichton has given his publishers the final draft of his next novel, *Airframe*, concerning the corporate intrigue that ensues when a TV news team investigates the root causes of an air disaster. Crichton's publisher, Knopf, indicates that the book touches many of the issues, such as airport security, that have become hot buttons in recent weeks, and the book is set for a record-breaking 2 million hardcover print run. On the movie front, Disney is developing a script based on Crichton's 1976 novel *Eaters of the Dead*, pitting 8th Century Vikings against a cannibal menace. Also in development at the House of the Mouse is an animated musical version of Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan*, with Phil Collins writing tunes.

Given Disney's huge success with original animated video sequels to *Aladdin*, it's hardly surprising that the studio intends to expand that market by continuing the cartoon adventures of the *Lion King* and *Pocahontas*. A more interesting move, however, is their acquisition of worldwide distribution rights to English-language versions of the films of Hayao Miyazaki. We suspect that Disney is just putting its toe in the water of OAV anime with the Miyazaki acquisition. If it works out, we can expect a flood of Japanese product to receive the benefit of Disney's global marketing muscle. Miyazaki's best-known works are *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Laputa, Castle in the Sky*.

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film talent is Jean-Claude Van Damme. Van Damme's *Hard Target* inaugurated the US career of director John Woo; more recently, the actor lent his talents to another Hong Kong filmmaker, Ringo Lam, for *Maximum Risk*. Now Tsui Hark, the writer-director-producer who was John Woo's mentor throughout his HK career, is preparing to shoot *The Colony*. The storyline concerns a Prisoner-like island community for retired and disgraced spies. Van Damme is a new resident who must escape the maximum security village to finish up a failed mission — or watch the world go under the heel of tyranny. In related news, Chow-Yun Fat, the charismatic star of many of Hark-Woo Hong Kong actionfests, is also making his Hollywood debut, costarring with Mia Sorvino in *The Replacement Killers* as a hired assassin who switches allegiance to become his target's protector.

Homegrown film genius Kevin Smith returned to low-budget filmmaking for *Chasing Amy*, the third film in his "New Jersey Trilogy," and advance word indicates that the film is up to the level of his feature debut *Clerks*, only with better production values. Though the film concerns an obsessive male's infatuation with a lesbian, fans will find the film of note, since most of the principal characters are comic book artists. While Smith's "mainstream" feature *Malrats* failed at the box office, the young hotshot has become a favored re-write man for genre projects. His rewrite of the *Six Million Dollar*



*After years of false starts, the big screen version of the nostalgia favorite Lost in Space is finally solidly in production at New Line.*

Man feature, which pits Steve Austin against another, far more advanced cyborg, is currently in casting stages, and Smith has begun work reshaping Gregory Poirer's script for *Superman Reborn*, based on the "Death of Superman" storyline from DC Comics of a few years ago, for a Summer 1997 production schedule. Smith is said to be especially excited about the chance to bring several of DC's less well-known characters to life.

*Snowcrash*, the novel by Neal Stephenson, who just picked up a Hugo for *The Diamond Age*, has been adapted for a CD-ROM game that should be available as you read this. A movie version is expected to be in preproduction by year's end, to be directed by

Marco Brambilla (*Demolition Man*, and the forthcoming Alicia Silverstone comedy *Excess Baggage*). The story concerns a computer virus that infects humans exposed to it while in virtual reality. Not entirely coincidentally, James Cameron recently announced a project entitled *Avatar*, which will similarly involve fully immersive VR worlds.

Universal is expecting big things from *Omega*, an action-suspense script pseudonymously written by two UK writers as "Patrick Lynch." The pointed thriller targets the big drug companies, with the story of a doctor who learns that a pharmaceutical giant is withholding a new antibiotic from the market, as they wait for a deadly new virus to create worldwide demand. Al Pacino has been cast as Satan, come to earth to practice law, in the Keanu Reeves vehicle *Devil's Advocate*. The lead cast for Robert Zemeckis's *Contact*, from Carl Sagan's novel, has been finalized; joining Jodie Foster are Matthew McConaughey, Tom Skerrit and James Woods.

Stephen Hopkins (*Predator 2*) will direct New Line's *Lost in Space* from a screenplay by Akiva Goldsman, best known for his work with Joel Schumacher on the *Batman* and John Grisham adaptations. The show, we are told, will be give serious treatment — though not without touches of humor — and “will remain faithful to the characters.” Casting is now under way. I nominate Christopher Lloyd for Doctor Smith. □

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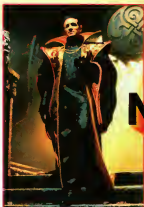
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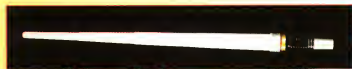


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Now, Bjo Trimble is pleased to introduce *Sci-Fi Spotlight*, the first real news publication for Sci-Fi fans. *Sci-Fi Spotlight* consists of 48 pages of lean, mean, tightly edited news copy covering everything from animation to X-Files. It has more news, hot tips, updates, rumblings, rumor-kills, inside information, last minute tidbits and who's-doing-what-to-whom per square inch than any other publication we've ever seen.

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# NEW

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## X-Files T-Shirts



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Make every day in 1997 as exciting, eerie, or unusual as you like with the help of the official X-Files 1997 Wall Calendar. Dozens of photos, interesting facts, and trivia about the show are scattered throughout twelve months to give you 365 days of Mulder, mayhem, and monsters. Start the year off right for yourself or someone on your conspiracy list.

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# NEW

### Pin-ache

Sleek, sophisticated, and immortalized in pewter, the X-Files logo with the catch phrase 'The Truth is Out There' has been reproduced on this beautiful pin, ready to add a touch of the supernatural to your wardrobe. Quiet, rustic look provides fandom in the most understated way possible. Available only in Government Conspiracy grey.

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### Top Secret Libation

A secret message awaits you from the agents of the X-Files. In order to retrieve the message, pour a hot beverage into this average-looking mug and watch carefully. Like magic The Truth is Out There fades from sight and is replaced with the words Trust No One. Holds 11 ounces and is dishwasher safe. Also features the "eye" and the X-Logo on the other side.

- X-Files Disappearing Mug #XFM2 \$13.95

### A Gray Area

Proclaim your fandom a bit more subtly with this easy-adjusting gray cap that features the famous X-Logo on the front and the ever-popular The Truth is Out There on the back. Sleek and comfortable, this hat is great for any event, indoors or out.

- X-Files Embroidered Gray Hat #XFHA4 \$14.95



trust no one

### "Spooky" Shirt

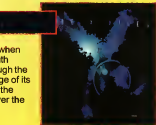
The most controversial agent on the FBI force is the infamous Fox Mulder, who stops at nothing, not even the irrational, to find the truth. His image backed by a patchwork of eerie lighting on this shirt makes a "spooky" statement anywhere.

- X-Files "Mulder" T-Shirt #XFTSLK24 - Large \$14.95
- X-Files "Mulder" T-Shirt #XFTSLK24 - X Large \$14.95

### "Did you see that...?"

It is a dark night deep in some unnamed woods when suddenly a light in the distance begins to burn with incredible intensity. Soundlessly it sweeps through the forest, always staying just out of clear sight range of its pursuers. That is the premise for the design on the back of this awesome shirt. Trust No One is over the front left chest.

- "Trust No One - X" T-Shirt #XFTSLK13 - Large \$14.95
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## There's nothing wrong with laughing at these Sci-Fi comedy classics.

BY STEVEN PUCHALSKI

SCIENCE FICTION MOVIES HAVE ALWAYS been filled with comic possibilities, and from as far back as 1930's *Just Imagine* to more modern box-office hits like the *Back to the Future* trilogy, filmmakers have played the genre for laughs. Steve Martin fell in love with a bell-jarred brain in *The Man with Two Brains*, Stanley Kubrick gave nuclear war a comic veneer in *Dr. Strangelove*, and let's not ignore the more adult approach taken in the X-rated *Flesh Gordon*.

Of course, if you want some laughs at the expense of tacky sci-fi, there's *Mystery Science Theater 3000: The Movie* (MCA/Universal), which arrives on video with hopes of achieving the same cult success as its TV series.



Cult classic *This Island Earth* must laughingly go where no cheese film has gone before: to the big screen for a feature film ribbing at the hands of the *Mystery Science Theater 3000* gang of critics.

The result is essentially the same as any of their episodes, except with a rather orthodox film as their *schlock du jour*. Instead of deconstructing their usual movie manure, they picked one of the better-known SF films of the '50s, *This Island Earth*, which is certainly dated after four decades but far from the "stinky, cinematic suppository" they describe it as.

With robotic puppet pals Crow T. Robot and Tom Servo in tow, the space-bound Mike Nelson is forced to watch the worst movies ever made in an attempt to, "drive him to the breaking point and crush his soul." After a brief intro for any newcomers, director Jim

Mallon and the gang grab front-row seats and begin taking potshots with a barrage of media-fed jokes—from references to William Shatner, Kate Moss, and Branson, Missouri to happily shooting holes in the film's scientific hokum. Just in case you're unfamiliar with the space opera in question, the plot has scientists lured to a think tank that is actually an alien cover, with our two leads eventually kidnapped to the doomed planet Metaluna.

If MST's big-screen debut seems a little slight, that's because, at only 74 minutes long, it's *shorter* than their TV show. Minus its new, wraparound footage, that means *This Island Earth*, itself originally 86 minutes long, has been whittled down to 57 minutes. The studio also shelled out for bigger (slightly) better sets and FX, with the spaceship skits providing genial, but instantly forgettable, breaks in the action.

Undoubtedly, what most fans will be wondering about are the jokes. Well, the rapid-fire gags arrive a little slower this time around, and arguably, it's far from their prime material. Still, it's loaded with savvy zingers (as well as all the usual cheap ones, of course). For fans who've memorized all the original episodes and have been craving more, this is a must-see.

A title like *Killer Klowns from Outer Space* (Media) sounds as if it'd fit nicely into the MST3K pantheon of cinematic misfires. Actually, this is a terrific romp that pays homage to the monsters-from-space movies of the '50s. It starts on a typical, small-town Friday night, when an Unidentified Flaming Object suddenly blazes across the sky. Grant Taylor and Suzanne Snyder play a young couple who follows its course to a nearby field, only to find a fully powered circus tent in the middle of nowhere.

Yes, their sleepy little town has been invaded by ray gun-toting killer klowns!

These aren't your ordinary, pie-in-the-face clowns, by any means; sure, they've got the baggy wardrobe and oversized shoes, but they're also psychotic, Ringling Brothers rejects with mouthfuls of rotten teeth, oversized features, and sadistic smiles. The inside of their circus tent-shaped spaceship resembles a high-tech funhouse, and their mission is to go door-to-door, kidnapping humans and storing them in cotton candy cocoons. In supporting roles,





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ABOVE: In *Killer Klowns from Outer Space*, there's something more deadly under the circus tent than peanuts and cotton candy. BELOW: The *Killer Klowns* bring terror to the big top.

we get Royal Dano as a cantankerous old fart who first discovers the clowns' lair, and perennial bad-guy John Vernon as a fun-loathing cop.

When broken down to its essentials, the story's arc has as much originality as *Invasion of the Saucer Men* or any other drive-in cheapie. But that's easily ignored in view of its candy-colored production design and sick sense of humor. I'm surprised that director Stephen Chiodo (who cut his teeth doing *Critters* creature effects) was able to persuade somebody to finance this bent idea, which includes balloon-animal bloodhounds, living popcorn kernels, hungry hand shadows and, for the finale, an angry, 15-foot-tall Clownzilla. Twisting all the old circus routines into a deadly new form, this sideshow SF is fueled by genuinely demented humor and imagination.

For an overdose of SF silliness there's the British-made *Morons from Outer Space* (HBO Video). Although a hit-and-miss endeavor, it runs on a wonderfully comic premise that, although beings from other planets are capable of flying to Earth in their ships, they aren't necessarily super-intelligent. In fact, they're more likely to enjoy *Benny Hill* Show reruns. It makes perfect sense to me, since how many people here on Earth know how to drive a car, but don't have a clue as to what makes it run?

The plot concerns a quartet of (British-sounding) humanoids who may be lost in deep space, but who are more concerned about finding a place to get a drink. Leaving

the smartest of the lot, Bernard (co-writer Mel Smith) behind in orbit, the other three crash-land in the middle of a London freeway. When the trio finally escapes from the government, they're embraced as visiting heroes, and begin doing beer endorsements. In the meantime, Bernard plummets into Arizona, and while his pals are treated like celebs, he's stuck in a mental hospital.

There's a good reason that they're called morons—their stupidity is mind-boggling, and when given a chess set, they play with it like baseball. Of course, the humans aren't Mensa candidates either, especially when (in a *Close Encounters* send-up) they try to communicate with the alien ship by playing "Born Free." In addition, James B. Sikking co-stars as a U.S. military commander who thinks this is all part of an invasion scenario,

and demands, "Show us your tentacles!"

Director Mike Hodges previously dabbled in sci-fi with *The Terminal Man* and *Flash Gordon*, but this time around he ditches all subtlety and bombards us with ridiculous characters and crude sight gags. If your idea of humor is spraying the inside of your space helmet when you let loose with a sneeze, this flick will be right up your alley.

Few remember *Meet the Hollowheads* (Media), which attempts to cross *Father Knows Best* with *Brazil*, and is one of the most bizarre sci-fi comedies of all time. Directed by special effects wiz Tom Burman, this offers up a futuristic vision that mixes unfathomable technology, slimy creatures, and pitch-black comedy within the framework of your typical domestic sitcom.

John Glover plays the unflappable father, Henry Hollowhead, who works at United Miblical, while mom (Nancy Mette) spends the day preparing a sumptuously disgusting dinner for hubby's sadistic boss. Her "special" treat is a thick, raw slice of a toad-like creature, wrapped in preprocessed dough. Their youngest son, Billy, hangs out with a trouble-making friend (the ever-creepy Joshua Miller); older brother Bud plays an instrument that has a chicken-like creature strapped to it; and a prepubescent Juliette Lewis is 14-year-old daughter Cindy, who sports a hot pink baby doll dress and misuses "softening jelly."

On top of all that, everything in sight is made out of umbilical tubing—from phones to kitchen utensils. There's a tank in the living room housing a pile of tentacles connected to an ever-watchful eyeball. And feeding grandpa involves a gigantic, hypodermic-like pump. Confused? You aren't the only one. This movie plunges the viewer into a totally alien household and doesn't explain a thing. Of course, a few items are best left in the dark, like getting "hopped up on butt polish."

In terms of gorgeously offbeat production design, this comes off like Pee-Wee Herman's



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Space aliens spy on a sun-bathing Geena Davis in the sci-fi musical romp *Earth Girls Are Easy*.

*Blade Runner*. Unfortunately, although it's unquestionably outrageous, little of it is funny. A weird and wonderful cinematic misfire, alternately repulsive and ridiculous, and featuring a brief appearance by Bobcat Goldthwait as a cop—and, you know, it's probably the only film in history that could make Bobcat look normal.

A title like *The Return of Captain Invincible* (Magnum) conjures up images of a terrible Saturday morning kids' show. Far from it. This 1980 Australian production is actually a charming homage to the superhero genre, and we first meet the "legend in leotards,"

Captain Invincible (Alan Arkin), in old newsreel footage—stopping '30s mobsters, fighting Nazis, and sporting a Superman-like hair curl. But in this scenario, the captain is called before the Un-American Activities Committee in the '50s, and is so demoralized that he simply disappears.

Cut to: Present-day Australia, where the captain has spent the past few decades honing his wino skills and now looks like any anonymous bum. Back in America, Christopher Lee co-stars as the sinister Mr. Midnight, who has an evil (albeit convoluted) plan to make New York City racially pure,

which involves real estate scams and a hypno-ray. On top of all that, the movie is a *musical*, with the president and his generals breaking into song.

Arkin is terrific as the cynical ex-crime-fighter who, when tracked down to save the day, complains that nobody ever seems to care about *his* needs. He also has to deal with his long-rusty powers, as well as a case of the super-d.t.s. It's Lee who steals the show, though, sitting in his red lair with his pet vulture. And wait until you hear this baritone sing, complete with a show-stopper that has him tempting Invincible with a fully-stocked bar ("There's nothing sicker in society./ Than a lack of liquor and sobriety."). If a couple of the numbers have a *Rocky Horror* flavor to them, it's because Richard O'Brien co-wrote the film's best songs.

Although far from a total success, director Philippe Mora does wonders on a threadbare budget that wouldn't have paid Brando's salary in the first *Superman* movie, while displaying a genuine love for the material. Aided by a witty script by Steven E. DeSouza (*Die Hard*) and an imaginative use of stock footage, this is a clever, unjustly ignored pastiche.

For a more sumptuous SF musical-comedy, there's *Earth Girls Are Easy* (Live), a campy and colorful romp that deposits friendly space aliens into the SoCal landscape. Directed with high style by MTV auteur Julien Temple, the film nowadays has a bigger reputation than ever due to its high-powered cast, which

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includes Jeff Goldblum, Damon Wayans, and Jim Carrey as the intergalactic visitors.

Geena Davis stars as Valerie, a manicurist who's having domestic problems with her cheating fiancé. Things go from bad to strange when a spaceship (which she first labels a "giant blow dryer") crashes into her swimming pool. Inside are a trio of furry extraterrestrials named Wiploc, Zeebo, and Mac, and with Geena's aid they explore Earth's strange culture. Their curiosity provides plenty of inspired comic schtick, such as drinking a lava lamp, eating her tropical fish, and putting their mimicry skills to use while channel surfing. When Geena takes them to her beauty shop for an extended body shave, they come out looking like their real selves (though it's odd to see Carrey with bleach-blond hair) and quickly indulge in the joys of the Valley.

Co-starring and co-written by comedienne Julie Brown, this is featherweight stuff that's more interested in a sense of humor than a sense of wonder. Some subplots are inane, like the predictable romance between Goldblum and Davis, while others are already dated, like a yawn-inducing dance contest featuring Wayans. The plot continues to spiral into generic wackiness when Wayans and Carrey accidentally rob a mini-mart and take a wrong-way joyride. Meanwhile, most of the truly amusing moments are generated by the talented cast, which keeps the film silly yet enjoyable.

Continuing in the same musical vein, there's the infamous *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* (Media). First, you need to ask yourself, just how frightening is the idea of an angry

tomato? Not at all. Luckily, everything else about the movie is terrifying—from its acting and production values right down to its sense of humor and tone-deaf tunes. It's cheap, inept, and ridiculous but, to director John DeBello's credit, he's fully aware of that fact.

Tomatoes around the country are rebelling against mankind, leaving their victims covered in tomato juice. Along the way there's a *Jaws* parody with screaming female swimmers, while an attack on a car consists of the off-camera crew heaving tomatoes against the windows. Mostly, we just get ordinary, supermarket-variety tomatoes rolling across the floor, toward potential victims, while making silly, slobbering sounds. There are also some larger, mutant ones, and the most ludicrous is the size of a VW Bug, which rolls about on very-obvious wheels.

How these mouthless fruits are "munching" on humans is never explained, but since they have the public in an uproar, the government calls in secret operative Mason Dixon and his team of inept underlings—including a master of disguise who infiltrates a giant tomato campfire, only to slip up by asking, "Pass the ketchup." There's also a dippy female reporter on the case, and loads of lame gags that'll keep you groaning.

The songs are kept to a minimum and with lyrics like "I know I'm gonna miss her/A tomato ate my sister," that's probably a blessing to us all. Still, the fly-by-night endeavor has a crude chutzpah that was lost in the three subsequent sequels—the first of which, *Return of the Killer Tomatoes*, features an unknown young actor named George Clooney. □

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Toy Story: Tom Hanks

and Tim Allen provide the lead voices for Disney's computer-animated marvel. Other actors include Don Rickles and Wallace Shawn, but the real star of the film is Pixar itself, the process that brought the mix to life. Randy Newman provides the score.

**Dragonheart:** The tagline for this film was "You will believe," and the visual effects wizards at Industrial Light & Magic made good on that promise. Dennis Quaid joins with Sean Connery (as the voice of Draco) in this touching and adventure-filled tale of a dragon and its hunter.

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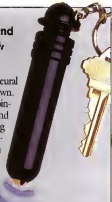
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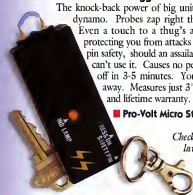


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# There's more than one way to cybersurf the Internet.

BY MELISSA J. PERENSON

**A**LL ROADS LEAD TO THE INTERNET. You could even say the Internet has evolved into the next great medium of pop culture. The popularity — and importance — of the Internet is growing exponentially, and becoming ever-more inextricably interwoven with our lives.

It's so hot, in fact, that everyone from the big three long distance telephone companies to the Baby Bells and cable companies are getting in on the act. When speaking about Internet access, though, we'll soon no longer be speaking strictly about accessing the Internet via your home PC and an online service or other Internet service provider. The playing field for

But, clearly, the next — and most exciting — wave of Internet access devices revolves around the use of your television for surfing the Internet's World Wide Web. There are two approaches being employed at this time. The first involves hooking up a PC to a large-screen TV. The second involves equipping a television set with the necessary hardware so the TV can access the Internet without the aid of a computer.

It's the ideal marriage: television, arguably the penultimate medium of pop culture, meeting the Internet, the heir apparent to the throne. In fact, the idea of Internet TV is, as Spock would say, logical, a natural extension of the viewing and entertainment habits engendered by the past 50-some-odd years of television. Television has always lent itself to a communal experience, one that is shared by families and friends clustered around the large, 27-inch (or larger) screen while lounging on the couch in the den.

The Web holds tremendous potential as the next great mass communications medium, for delivering everything from news and weather to phone directories, encyclopedias, multiplayer games, and other interactive services, including video-on-demand. Yet there's one particularly potent stumbling block. After all, think about it: playing video games with your friend while sitting on stiff-

backed office chairs and staring at a 17-inch screen on a desk is just not the same as being sprawled out on the family-room floor playing the latest Nintendo game on a 31-inch screen.

That's the consumer experience that Internet TVs are looking to duplicate. Internet TVs want to make surfing the Web a "watchable" pastime that looks and behaves like your television, and appeals to couch-potatoes. Plus, Web access that's integrated with your familiar, comfortable television — in ways no more complicated than operating your average cable TV set-top box — will open up the world of the Web to the broader, noncomputing public as no other device can.

"It's all about making the Internet experience fun and engaging for the consumer," elaborates Gary Franz, vice president of sales at ViewCall America, a company that makes a set-top box and connection service for tele-



Accessing the Internet can be done in many ways, but there's only one way to find the best in sci-fi news and entertainment — by logging onto the Sci-Fi Channel's own web site, the Dominion.

Internet access is in the process of being radically transformed — along with the entire paradigm of where, what, and how you view the Internet. It has to do with convergence, a term that has long been used to vaguely describe the coming together of the computer and consumer entertainment industries.

Now, however, the concept of convergence is finally taking on a tangible definition with the advent of Internet access coming live, on your TV screen.

The idea of accessing the Internet through means other than your garden-variety PC is nothing new: Last April, this column focused on the developing plans for Internet "appliances" and network computers, essentially stripped-down computers designed solely for connecting online (whereby all software is stored on the server you log on to). The first of these network computers came available this fall.

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visions (770-729-2929, www.viewcallamerica.com). In ViewCall's case, Franza explains, the best way to think about the service is "as a TV-centric AOL offered on a set-top box delivered over a television. It's entertainment enhancement of TV services."

Unfortunately, there's more to bringing the Internet to big-screen TVs than just plugging your PC into the back of your television, as you would do with either a Nintendo or Sega game, or with a VCR.

The presentation of data on-screen lies at the heart of the problem. Content needs to be optimized for viewing on the low-resolution, large-screen dimensions of a TV screen. Images on the Web today are designed to take advantage of the high-resolution capabilities of computers; view those same graphics-intensive Web pages on your TV and the results won't be nearly so dazzling. Text and tables and precise graphics that work on your PC at close range may not look right on a big-screen TV's Web browser from five or ten feet away.

There's also the question of whether these TV-based devices will have enough memory and power to make the most of the Internet experience. Cutting-edge Web technologies like Java, VRML, and Shockwave may be too much for these devices to display. And then there's the issue of upgrades, to make sure the devices can keep up with the latest Web technologies — which change so fast and furiously that even industry experts have trouble keeping up.

Success, notes Franza, rests in "the way the content is delivered. The Internet is merely the means of delivery."

The way the ViewCall product delivers content is via ViewCall's original, consumer-based service customized for use with their \$300 WEBster set-top box; the rest of the Internet's resources will lie within reach beyond their customized environment. ViewCall's system, which is being offered as a package, includes an optional keyboard and the ability to hook up a printer or external storage device like the popular \$150 Iomega Zip drive to the set-top box's parallel port.

Thus, what's taking shape is not only the idea of providing a way to surf the Web at large, but also providing select and targeted Web-based interactive services that are delivered over your television. Think of it as the second coming of the much-heralded era of interactive television, just not in the same form as was originally touted three years ago when interactive television was the buzz phrase-du-jour.

The Internet TV phenomenon is straddling the colliding worlds of PCs and television in several other ways. Computer manufacturer Gateway 2000 (800-846-2000, www.gw2k.com) was the first out the door with a product that addresses the need for a big-screen viewing area. The consumer-oriented Destination system, with a base configuration of \$3,799, includes an Intel Pentium 120-MHz processor, a 31-inch viewable area VGA screen, a

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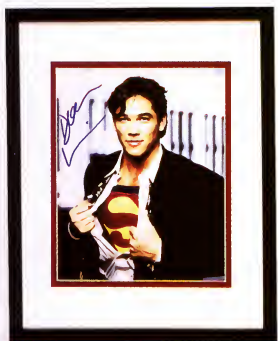
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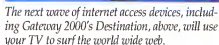
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The WorldVision includes a 28-inch Super VGA TV/monitor running at 800 x 600 pixels resolution; the screen provides a 27.5-inch viewable area. The computer portion, called the ComputerDeck, is not exactly cutting edge, but it certainly will do the trick — for the moment. The system offers a 100-MHz Pentium processor; a 1GB hard disk.



Philips Magnavox's \$329 WebTV is a set-top box that plugs into your ordinary television and your phone line, without conflicting with your VCR or cable box. The box, designed by WebTV Networks (415-614-5566, [www.webtv.net](http://www.webtv.net)), a startup headed by three former Apple Computer executives, comes equipped with a 33.3-Kbps modem (the fastest analog modem currently available), 16-bit stereo audio output, a credit card

Zenith Electronics' NetVision TV (800-531-0039), which should also be available for the holiday season, also doesn't replace the computer. Zenith's NetVision takes a 27-inch television set and incorporates a technology platform from Diba to allow users to access e-mail and the Web and run Java applications running on a remote computer through the television set. The package includes an infrared trackball remote control and an

optional wireless keyboard.

Cable modems are actually the one technology that promises to help Internet TVs fulfill their potential as the future platform for digital delivery of entertainment services. Right now, cable modems are just in their infancy. Largely in the trials stage, nationwide cable giants like Time Warner, TCI, and Cablevision are testing the waters with cable modem trials. By transmitting data over existing broadband cable TV networks at a rate of 700 to 1,000 times faster than a standard modem connection, cable modems offer a distinct, high-speed advantage over standard 28.8-Kbps analog modems. (More on cable modems in a future column.)

Set-top boxes and integrated computer chips are just two of the ways you can expect to have Internet access through your TV. Also getting in on the act are video game companies. The appeal of the Internet to that market is tremendous; just imagine the multiplayer games that could be created for game play over the Internet (already, Sega Enterprises in Japan has released such a game, and more games are in development at Sega of America).

The U.S. arm of Sega (415-508-2800, [www.sega.com](http://www.sega.com)) is offering the Sega Saturn Net Link as a \$199 upgrade to its 32-bit Sega Saturn game system. The device adds a 28.8-Kbps modem and a customized Web browser to the standard Sega system, with a mouse and keyboard available as options. Net Link users can then access the Internet via their television for such activities as networked gaming, e-mail, chat, and Web surfing. Sega's software handles the screen-dimensions issue by automatically shrinking Web pages for display on your TV.

Philips Electronics (615-475-8869, [www.philips.com/sv](http://www.philips.com/sv)) has added a \$200 Web browser upgrade to its CD-Interactive player. The upgrade uses digital signal processors to convert Web text and graphics into CD-I formats for display on a TV set through a customized browser. Inexplicably, Philips is literally delivering a machine that's out-dated upon delivery, thanks to the inclusion of a slow 14.4-Kbps modem.

Bandai Digital Entertainment's (310-404-1600, [www.bdec.com](http://www.bdec.com)) \$599 Pippin @World is a sleek device that falls somewhere between the TV set-top boxes, computers, and game-machine add-ons already discussed. Pippin plugs into your TV and uses Apple's Macintosh operating system and PowerPC processor to provide Web surfing, gaming, and basic word-processing and e-mail capabilities.

And, just wait: Renegade Systems is planning a computer with a satellite receiving system for accessing the Internet via Hughes Network System's DirecTV and DirecPC satellite system at speeds of 400-Kbps or greater.

Like we said at the outset, today all roads lead to the Internet. Stay tuned: Next issue, we'll tell you what you can do once you get there. □

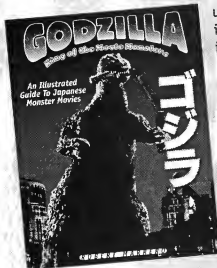
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# SCI-FI ENTERTAINMENT

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE SCI-FI CHANNEL



## FEATURES

### 50 Michael Jordan's Space Jam

Bugs Bunny and friends go one step beyond Roger Rabbit in this state-of-the-art animated feature.

### 58 Star Trek: First Contact

The Next Generation crew boldly goes where no one has gone before: back in time to battle the treacherous Borg.

### 66 Trek Movies

With the eighth Star Trek film causing a stir, it's a perfect time to look back on the magnificent seven voyages that came before.



### 70 Attack of the Angry Red Planet

Tim Burton's Mars Attacks! Mounts a Holiday Invasion on Your Local Theater

### 78 The Next X: Chris Carter Speaks Out

The truth is still out there.

### 82 X appeal

Which supernatural show inspired by Fox's cult hit will survive?

**The Cover:** The crew of The Next Generation takes over sci-fi's finest franchise in Star Trek: First Contact. Pictured are Captain Picard (Patrick Stewart), Data (Brent Spiner) and Commander Riker (Jonathan Frakes).

### 84 Thinner: King's Latest Winner

"Richard Bachman's" weighty tale of supernatural vengeance tips the scales on the big screen.

### 88 "They're Heeere!"

The horrific cable hit Poltergeist: The Legacy brings its supernatural success story to a first syndicated season.

## DEPARTMENTS

### 8 Editorial

SF is at the core of what we love the most.

### 10 Letters

Readers question DVD technology and rave about The Phantom.

### 12 Channel News

The Sci-Fi Channel Presents Sightings, and Star Trek Celebrates the Big 3-0

### 16 Future Shock

Lucas and Spielberg continue to create the hottest news in the sci-fi galaxy.

### 34 Videos

There's nothing wrong with laughing at these Sci-Fi comedy classics.

### 44 Infinite Channels

There's more than one way to cybersurf the Internet.



### 94 Bookshelf

The science fiction of the starship Enterprise could become science fact, say two noted physicists.

### 98 U.S. Channel Guide

Sci-Fi Channel program schedule for the United States, plus complete movie listings.

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*Bugs Bunny and friends go one step beyond Roger Rabbit in this state-of-the-art animated feature.*

# Michael Jordan's SPACE JAM

BY DON E. PETERSON





**W**arner Bros. is hoping the public will be "ready to Jam" this winter as they roll out the full-length animated romp *Space Jam* featuring many of their popular Looney Tunes characters interacting with the film's star, basketball great Michael Jordan.

Calling this project "ambitious" at this point would almost be an understatement. Over one thousand employees have been diligently working at any given time on the movie since the animation portion of this film began pre-production in early 1995. And as the movie nears its November release date, animation studios around the world (including those in London, Texas, Ohio, Los Angeles, Ireland and Canada) are working overtime in order to deliver what promises to be this year's *Toy Story* in terms of groundbreaking animation and cutting edge humor.

"When I first came onto this project I knew it would be something special," says Bruce Smith, who serves as the animation co-director with Tony Cervone on the film. "I had previously worked on *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* and I saw the parallels there, and at the same time, because of where technology is today, I knew it could go three steps beyond what we did in *Roger Rabbit*."

Comedy director Ivan Reitman (*Ghostbusters*, *Stripes*) was hired to serve as pro-

ducer and Godfather to the project, employing state-of-the-art computer-generated trickery for optimum production values and plotting out the daunting task of utilizing nearly half of the 900 Warner Bros. Tunes character canon within the film's 78 minute running time.

*Space Jam* was spun off from the successful series of Nike commercial spots also featuring Jordan and Bugs, and Smith says they tried hard to emulate that frenetic style both in attitude and in the story for the film itself.

"*Space Jam* takes place in the summer of 1993 and is actually a period piece," notes Smith. "At the time, Jordan was still a baseball player, so this movie will basically tell the story of what really brought Michael back to basketball."

The plot is set into motion when the tiny space creatures the Nerdluks who are sent from amusement park Moron Mountain in outer space to Earth by their slimy boss Swackhammer (Danny DeVito) to steal away the Looney Tunes so they can hopefully boost attendance at his orbiting amusement park with their unlimited talent.

Of course the Tunes, being smarter than the average road runner, decide to challenge the Nerdluks to a little game of basketball in exchange for their freedom. Once they agree, the Nerdluks learn all they can and end up "absorbing" the skills of such NBA all-stars as Charles Barkley, Patrick Ewing, Muggsey Bogues and Larry Johnson and transforming themselves into the powerful, animated cartoon team dubbed the Monstars.



**TOP:** The bumbling Nerdluck's siphon away the powers of Earth's greatest basketball players and turn into the Monstars.

**ABOVE:** Larry Bird and Bill Murray chat courtside before helping the Looney Tunes characters battle the alien opposition. **FAR LEFT:** Sports megastar Michael Jordan comes face to face with a "wascally wabbit". **LEFT:** Before the animation is added, Jordan must perform before a blank screen.



Seinfeld's Wayne Knight portrays baseball publicist Stan Podolak, who joins living legend Michael Jordan in a locker room populated by animated athletes.

## What George Lucas is talking about doing in the Star Wars movies, we're doing in this movie.

So what are Bugs and his pals to do? Well, for one, they plan to bring Jordan out of retirement so he can hopefully save the day.

"We really went for the feel of the '40s version of the Looney Tunes characters as opposed to the style of the more modern cartoons," says Smith. "Back then, the characters were young and had a lot of energy. That's because they were tailored for the big screen. Whereas in the '70s they were much more talky. They simply struck a pose, said

a line or a long line and moved on."

According to Smith, by returning to the characters' roots, they also managed to adjust some of attitudes that had been streamlined over the years, particularly by making Daffy Duck more of a sidekick to Bugs in the Bob Hope-Bing Crosby tradition. "There was a time when he was loony, but later on as he evolved for television, Daffy became a little more angry and much more verbal," says Smith. "We tried to bring him back to the fun and vibrant character of the '40s."

Well aware of the lineage the Looney Tunes characters have built over the years, Smith says it was also a bit of a challenge to create the film's new characters, such as villain Swackhammer, the Nerdlocks and their Monster counterparts, and of course Bugs' curvaceous new love interest Lola Bunny.

"The Warner Bros. character already have such an identity that it's challenging on many levels to create new characters that have the same depth," says Smith. "Lola was the most important because she had to feel as if she existed in the Looney Tunes world for sixty years, just like Bugs. We also didn't want her to look like Bugs in drag either, which some of the early concept drawings felt like. Ultimately we found the intricacies that ultimately made Lola who she now is."

The insurgence of computer-generated art into the realm of animation has certainly allowed for an improvement in quality. One fear over the years was that it would replace traditional hand-painted animation, but according to Live Action/Animation Visual Effects Supervisor Ed Jones (whose company

Cinesite is handling all the film's digital effects), the pen and paper process is still very integral. The only difference is that computer technology can now be used for a broader color palette and the addition of better highlights, definitions and shadows on the cartoons in order to give the final product a very three-dimensional look.

"We really wanted a stylized look for this film, and we wanted the environment where the Tunes co-exist with human beings to have a photo-realistic quality to it in terms of light, reflections and exposures," says Jones.

By the time *Space Jam* is finished, Jones notes that there will be over 11,000 visual effects shots, equalling 65 minutes of the film's 78 minute running time.

"Right now we're averaging about 29 elements per shot," says Jones. "It's quite a bit, and if you do the math it equals out to being over ten terabytes of data that is being passed around. If you broke it down into floppy disk terms, it would fill a 10,000 square foot warehouse. So this is a monster, not only to achieve in the short amount of time that we have, but also from the creative aspect, to make it something different with respect to the reverence to the Tunes as well."

Having developed the formula for mixing live action with animation on *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, Jones admits they were able to use new technology to improve on what was once considered ground-breaking.

"We started with the basic recipe and spiced it up," says Jones. "The tricks were established with *Roger Rabbit*, so we had a

*Continued on page 97*





The background of the poster features a large, dark, circular structure resembling a planet or a massive mechanical component. A bright green, ethereal light emanates from the center of this structure, creating a focal point. To the right, a metallic, spherical object with intricate details and a glowing red light is visible. The overall color palette is dominated by dark greens, blacks, and metallic tones, with the title text providing a sharp contrast in purple and orange.

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The Next Generation crew  
boldly goes where no one has  
gone before: back in time to  
battle the treacherous Borg.

RESISTANCE IS FUTILE." Does that mantra strike a chord of fear? It should. Because the Borg are back, as relentless and as powerful as ever in *Star Trek: First Contact*. And they mean business. So, too, does *First Contact*, the eighth in a proud lineage of *Star Trek* films, and the first adventure to squarely rest on the shoulders of the cast of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. This is *The Next Generation*'s chance to shine, after having shared the limelight with much of the original cast in 1994's *Generations*.

Set nearly a year after the newly commissioned *Enterprise-E* has entered service, *First Contact*'s premise packs the winning combination of the Borg — those antagonists you love to hate — and time travel, a perennially popular *Trek* storytelling device. The crew follows the Borg back in time to prevent them from interfering with events, and thus preserving the timeline as it ought to be.

Returning for the *Enterprise-E*'s tour of duty is the entire *Next Generation* cast

— Patrick Stewart (Captain Picard), Jonathan Frakes (Commander Riker), Brent Spiner (Data), Michael Dorn (Worf), Gates McFadden (Dr. Crusher), Marina Sirtis (Deanna Troi), and LeVar Burton (Geordi La Forge), sans recurring guest Whoopi Goldberg. Rounding out the talent pool are Academy Award nominees James Cromwell, who portrays Zefram Cochrane, the 21st-century inventor of the starship warp drive system; and Alfre Woodard, in the role of his determined assistant, Lily Sloane. Cromwell, most recently seen as the farmer in *Babe*, is a familiar face to eagle-eyed *Star Trek* viewers, as he's guest-starred in *Next Generation* episodes "The Hunted" and "Birthright, Parts I and II."

In the director's chair is the versatile Frakes, who's no stranger to pulling double-duty both behind and in front of the camera. Although this is Frakes' first time directing a feature, he has honed his skills directing eight episodes of *Next Generation*, as well as episodes of *Voyager* and *Deep Space Nine*, and *Diagnosis Murder*.

Nothing in Hollywood is a foregone conclusion, but within a few months of *Generations*' release, the next feature was already being discussed. "I didn't get much of a break between the two movies," admits former

*Next Generation* scribe Brandon Braga, who co-wrote both *Generations* and *First Contact*. "The last time, I was doing *Generations* and the final season of *The Next Generation*. There was a lot of pressure on TNG in that final year, because it was the last season, and we



# STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT

BY MELISSA J. PERENSON



INSET: Worf (Michael Dorn) and Captain Picard (Patrick Stewart) must travel back in time to safeguard the inventor of the warp drive. BELOW: The single-minded Borg make their big screen debut, battling to prevent humanity's First Contact with an alien race.

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knew it had to be really special. Particularly the final episode, which Ron [Moore] and I were writing at one point simultaneously with *Generations*. *Generations* was my first movie, and it was a lot more stressful; I didn't know what I was getting into."

This time out, Braga found himself juggling his duties as supervising producer of *Voyager* with his writing and developing of *First Contact*. "It was much easier this time around. I was much more prepared because I had done it already. I was prepared for not having any kind of a life outside of work at all."

Braga acknowledges that *Generations* wasn't perfect. "As proud of it as I am, I think *Generations* had a little too much story for its own good. It was a passing-of-the-baton type of story, and you had two generations of characters to service and somehow bring together. Plus, you had to have an interesting mystery and action story for *The Next Generation* crew. It was overwhelming on the story level, and I think some *TNG* characters got shortchanged as

a result, so that Kirk could play a bigger role. Not that that's bad," Braga is quick to add. "But, because this next film is purely *Next Generation*, we could fashion the story from scratch, and we didn't have to accomplish anything, except to tell a great story, embellish on the *Star Trek* universe, and have fun. It's why I enjoyed writing this movie much more than the last one," Braga says with untempered enthusiasm.

"We instantly knew we wanted the film to feature the Borg; that's about the only thing we did know," Braga recalls of the initial story meetings he had with producer Rick Berman and co-writer Ronald D. Moore back in early 1995. "We felt like we'd never seen the Borg the way we really wanted to do them, which is with a big-screen budget. Then we thought, it would be great to do the Borg invading Earth; but, we've already seen big battles around Earth." That's where the time-travel element comes in. "What if the Borg had a secret plan to go back in time, to stop first contact with an alien race and to

assimilate Earth in that time period, in order to assimilate Earth in the future?"

Around a half-dozen time periods were considered as a destination in the past, including the Renaissance. "But the one we thought would be most interesting was the time when *Star Trek* was born," says Braga. "After a little digging, we came across this hero in *Star Trek* lore named Zefram Cochrane, who created warp drive. We figured that's what probably led to first contact with an alien race, which probably brought humanity out of its latest dark age and into interplanetary space travel, and eventually led to the formation of the Federation and *Star Trek* itself. It's a time when Earth had a lot of technology, but hadn't gotten their act together yet; they were kind of on the verge of greatness."

"This is very much a *Star Trek* movie; the message and the philosophies are *Star Trek* through and through. It's got heart, it's got interesting thematic material, but at the same time, it is definitely the most action-packed *Star Trek* film ever. It's very fast-paced, scary,



**LEFT:** Dr. Beverly Crusher (Gates McFadden) is surprised by the embattled crew of the *Defiant*. **BELOW:** Captain Picard (Patrick Stewart) and Lily Sloane (Alfre Woodard) trek back to the 1940's to visit L.A.'s Union Station. **BOTTOM:** First Contact's special effects wizards take us where no space ship has gone before.

Bebe Neuwirth never even factored into the equation. "You've got to remember, most people don't remember the titles of television shows that aired four or five years ago. So that wasn't a concern."

It took three drafts before the writers found the right balance. "You realize after the first draft that certain things don't work," explains Braga. "One of the things that didn't work was that we, strangely enough, didn't have Captain Picard in direct conflict with the Borg; he basically was on the planet's surface dealing with things, and Riker was on the

ship fighting the Borg. So we decided to change that, to flip their roles. That led to the biggest change in the film, namely that Picard was going to face the demons of his past, and face the Borg once more. There's something of a vengeance theme with Picard, and that brought Picard much more into focus, and really helped all aspects of the film."

The character of Zefram Cochrane was also fleshed out in successive drafts of the script. Considered a minor player in the beginning, notes Braga, "we made Cochrane a much more interesting, full-fledged character."

One thing that's been widely reported is that Lily is Picard's love interest. "In the first draft, it was a full-on romance, and they fell in love. But it was wrong. It was just wrong from the get-go," Braga says emphatically. "Never would have worked. Woodard and Stewart are terrific together, and there's a romantic subtext of sorts, but we pulled it back, because Picard is hardly going to have a full-fledged romance when the Borg are about to take over Earth. The whole thing



and exciting. And that was a conscious decision on our part. We did not sacrifice anything, but, because it was the Borg, we wanted to do something that really kicked butt in the action department. *Generations* had some great action sequences in it, but it was also a very ponderous film, a very philosophical film. We thought that maybe it was time, as a change of pace, to kick it into high gear, and have a much more lean, action-oriented story."

The film was originally given the working title of *Star Trek: Resurrection*, "but you know, that was always very tentative," remarks Braga. "And no one was in love with it, anyway. Then it turned out *Alien: Resurrection* was announced, so I'm glad we changed it. For a while we were calling it *Star Trek: Borg*, and then we were calling it *Star Trek: Genesis*, and then we were *Star Trek* this. We settled on *First Contact*; it was the coolest choice. Rick Berman's wife came up with that title." The fact that *First Contact* was the title of a fourth season episode that guest-starred



was completely rethought from the ground up. It's not a romance at all now; it's more of an uneasy friendship."

Even though Frakes has assumed directing duties, don't assume you'll be seeing any less of the First Officer on the bridge. Quite the opposite, actually; Riker has a central role in the story. "Whether the actors will admit it or not, everyone's got a great role in this movie," asserts Braga. "All of the characters."

Indeed, there's a little something for most everybody in this film. "Data has a great story. He still has his emotion chip, and we explore that a little bit, and in a surprising way. Picard has to deal with the Borg and his past with the Borg, and he's got a woman from the 21st century to deal with as well. There's Zefram Cochrane, and Riker and his team having to make sure that history runs its course, and that he makes that flight, makes first contact with the aliens. And that's a very surprising arc, because Zefram Cochrane is not quite what anyone expected him to be; this great historical figure turns out to be something of a jerk."

Rejoining his former crewmates is Worf, who's been serving on *Deep Space Nine* since the *Enterprise-D*'s crash in *Generations*. "The

*Defiant* is involved in the fighting against the Borg at the beginning of the movie. Naturally, Worf is on that ship. To those who watch *Deep Space Nine*, Worf's appearance will make perfect sense," says Braga. "To those who don't, there's a funny guy who looks like an animal coming onto the ship. We don't want to get too involved in explaining why Worf is there, because it's weird to start acknowledging a television show in a movie. It brings [a film] down, in my opinion."

According to Braga, reports of *The Defiant*'s demise are greatly exaggerated: *The Defiant* will not be destroyed in battle.

One thing you won't be seeing in this film is the crescent-shaped VISOR device that allowed the blind Chief Engineer Geordi La Forge to see. The decision to lose the VISOR, says Braga, "came primarily from LeVar Burton. He was sick of wearing the damn oilcan on his head, and I don't blame him." Instead, La Forge will see by using ocular implants that make his irises appear as though they have circuitry embedded within them. Although La Forge's lack of VISOR is acknowledged in the film, the device's absence is never explained. Notes Braga, "It's pretty obvious that it's like

someone who finally got contact lenses and stopped wearing glasses.

If there's one thing that stands out in Braga's mind about *First Contact*, it's that "the film is about personal responsibility, greed, and selfishness," Braga says thoughtfully. "It's also about stopping to think for two seconds that maybe you might have a greater social responsibility. The theme of this movie is best encapsulated in the character of Zefram Cochrane, a man who has to realize he's got to take a bigger view of the world than just his own little problems."

In making the leap to the big screen, the Borg's appearance has been altered to appear more horrifying and threatening, a necessary concession to the unforgiving, intense scrutiny of the movie camera. "On the TV show, they were cool. But if you look at them, they're basically guys wearing black jumpsuits, with little cybernetic pieces planted on their body. That's just not going to hold up on the big screen. So we redesigned them. They have the same basic look to them, of course; we just made them more elaborate, with more elaborate arm mechanisms, and more elaborate head pieces and head make-up."



necessary. She has a little more sentence, a little more autonomy."

The Borg of *First Contact* are in their prime, most diabolical form, as epitomized in the classic two-part episode, "The Best of Both Worlds," in which Picard is captured by the Borg and transformed into Locutus. These Borg are unaffected by events that were set in motion later in the fifth-season episode, "I Borg," and its follow-up, the sixth season's two-part cliffhanger, "Descent"; in these episodes, the concept of individualism is introduced into the Borg Collective. "Those events are over, they have no impact on this film whatsoever," affirms Braga. "The Borg are back to their usual selves."

Supervising a staff of over 100 construction workers, illustrators, set designers, and model builders was production designer Herman Zimmerman. Zimmerman is the self-described "production designer of record" for *Star Trek*, an appropriate term considering he's served in the same capacity for *Next Generation's* pilot, the past three *Star Trek* films, and *Deep Space Nine*.

With an overall budget that topped \$50 million, *First Contact* also had the largest production design budget of any *Trek* film since

*LEFT: Data (Brent Spiner) must wrestle with his emotion clip even as he rescues the galaxy. BELOW LEFT: In early drafts of the script, Lily Sloane (Alfred Woodard) acted as a love interest, but as finally filmed, she took a more action-oriented role. TOP: Worf (Michael Dorn) and the crew of the Defiant are the first to battle the treacherous Borg. ABOVE: Sloane aids warp drive inventor Zefram Cochrane (James Cromwell) during enemy attack.*

*Star Trek: The Motion Picture.* "We've spent over \$5 million on the sets alone," notes Zimmerman. "That's not counting the money that the set decorator spent, or the money that the special effects department spent, making everything work. But the picture will look like an \$80 to \$100 million picture."

As with *Generations*, special effects for *First Contact* were handled by Industrial Light and Magic, while veteran *Trek* make-up artist Michael Westmore designed the enhanced look for the Borg.

Preproduction on *First Contact* started the first week of January 1996, with principal photography beginning in April. "We should

Although Braga declines to provide details about the Borg Queen, who's played by Alice Krige, he does offer, "She's pretty creepy looking. She's like the other Borg, half-human and half-cyborg, and yet she has a distinct look that you've never seen."

Braga is also hesitant to discuss the Borg Queen's role within Borg society. "The Borg are still a Collective, hive mind, we're not changing that. The last thing we want to do is redefine who the Borg are. But we are introducing a new element, because we wanted to personify the Borg in a character. Basically, she is a part of the Collective who controls the hive, and gives guidance when





have started last November, but the script wasn't really in a form that we could start doing any serious work on it until probably two weeks before Christmas," says Zimmerman. "We worked at a pretty fast clip to make everything happen in front of the camera, on schedule. But we had a good time doing it. There weren't a lot of personalities that bumped heads and made life difficult from one department to another. It was a project where the script was followed; it was not murdered by the studio so it would come to terms with the budget, it wasn't murdered by an actor who was being too arrogant or too difficult to work with, it wasn't murdered by a production manager and a director fighting with each other all the time."

The 12-week shoot included three weeks of filming on location at Arizona's Titan Missile Museum, the Angeles National Forest near Los Angeles, and an abandoned restaurant in downtown LA's Union Station. Transformations were the order of the day: Zimmerman's team built a 21st-century former military-encampment town in the middle of the forest, while the restaurant served as a 1940's locale for a holodeck sequence. The remainder of the shoot was filmed on the soundstages of Paramount Pictures.

Designing for the Borg Collective, not to mention the *Enterprise* while it's under the Borg's influence, were two of the more challenging propositions. "We have a writing directive that says that the Borg go into a regenerative state in these alcoves that are part and parcel of their being," notes Zimmerman. "so the design of those alcoves, multiplied by the magic of the opticals used in the movies, has created a Borg Collective that's a much more in-depth examination of the Borg as a culture than we were able to do on the television show."

The last time we saw the starship *Enterprise*, the vessel saw a scattered mass of charred ruins, the victim of a spectacular crash landing in *Generations*. Replacing that

ship is the powerful, Sovereign class U.S.S. *Enterprise* 1701-E. "It's a beautiful ship, more spacious," says Zimmerman, appraising his latest creation.

The new, sleeker shape of the *Enterprise*, says Zimmerman, "is perhaps a little more aerodynamic in profile. It has some elements of the *Voyager* ship, but it also harkens all the way back to the *Enterprise* of *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. A lot of thought went into the ship to make it a logically continuous design from the earlier starships."

Zimmerman drew on the experiences of *The Next Generation*, *Deep Space Nine*, and *Voyager*, when designing the new ship's bridge, taking the best elements of each of those starships and putting them together to create the *Enterprise-E*'s bridge. "It's a little less comfortable and more business-like than the *Enterprise-D*, intentionally so since it was built with the threat of the Borg in mind," says Zimmerman. "The captain is at a central command station, and his lieutenants are



surrounding him, pretty much facing him, so they're instantly at the captain's beck and call." On this ship, the captain's chair is elevated slightly, but the chairs for the first and second mates are raised equally.

Since all of the sets were built from scratch — as opposed to modifying existing sets used for the TV series, as the last few features had done — you can expect to see some fresh design implementations on the bridge. The observation lounge is now directly accessible from the bridge, so the actors can actually walk from the bridge to the observation lounge. There's also an airlock attached to the bridge; notes Zimmerman, "We've always implied that there was an airlock somewhere near the bridge, but we have never really focused on that dramatically."

Another significant alteration is to the viewscreen technology. "With the new viewscreen, you don't see any picture on it unless the captain or somebody in authority

calls up the image," explains Zimmerman. "We've always had the impression that the viewscreen was a window, which it isn't. It is a screen, and it only works when you put an image on it. In the case of this screen, when it's off, it's off, and you see the wall behind it."

Main engineering, continues Zimmerman, "is the most dramatic engine room that we've ever created, with the largest warp engine yet seen on a starship. The ship also has miles and miles of corridors in this picture, new Jefferies Tube designs, and a cargo bay that opens to space."

Although redesigned, the captain's Ready Room remains much as it was. Gone are Picard's fish, although you'll still find a model of the *Enterprise*, and Picard's treasured Shakespeare volume. New to the Ready Room is an interior view of the captain's loo. Although we've seen the door to the Ready Room bathroom in the TV series, we've never had cause to enter the chamber, at least not until *First Contact*.

**TOP LEFT:** It's time for The Next Generation crew to cut loose from the original crew and fly solo in the latest *Star Trek* film. **LEFT:** Although Jonathan Frakes (at right) directs the eighth entry in the movie franchise, his character of Commander Riker will still assume a central role. **ABOVE:** Not only are the lives of Captain Picard (Patrick Stewart) and Data (Brent Spiner) at stake in their war with the Borg, but the fate of the entire Federation itself is in jeopardy as well.

The fundamental difference between designing for *Star Trek*, the television series, and *Star Trek*, the feature films, is scope. "The features screen is much less forgiving than a television screen, simply because television has less resolution and the screens are smaller. So, out of necessity, the details of the motion picture have to be

*Continued on page 104*

# BACK to the FUTURE

BY CONNIE HIRSCH

*As the latest Star Trek blockbuster debuts, we take a look back at Roddenberry's big screen legacy.*

IF, THIRTY YEARS AGO, SOMEONE had asked you whether a television series that was canceled after just three seasons could spawn four sequel series, a veritable library of both fiction and nonfiction books, a department store full of tie-in products — but most of all, seven full-length theatrical motion pictures, some of them box office hits — would you think the very idea was science fiction?

*Star Trek* the movie series is quite an achievement in movie history, but an even bigger splash in the small pond of filmed SF. *Star Trek* is a touchstone that nearly every science fiction movie either references or deliberately refuses to reference, partly because the series comprises so many different stories, and its split emphasis on special effects, characterization, and drama. With the 30th anniversary upon us, and the premiere of the eighth *Star Trek* movie nigh, it's a good time to review and rate these past seven cinematic wonders, and consider how many ways there are for a movie to go wrong ... or right.

So here are the pictures in chronological order, rated on a 10 point scale on elements such as

SFX and humor. What makes a movie work are different factors that may not appeal in the same strength to every person's tastes. Ask a dozen fans and you will likely get a dozen different opinions on which movie is best and why. By examining these movies in a quantifiable fashion we may illuminate such differences. (To relive the adventure, remember to check the Program Guide elsewhere in this issue for air times of these classic films.)

## Star Trek: The Motion Picture

**Vital Stats:** Released 1979; Director: Robert Wise (*The Day The Earth Stood Still*, *The Andromeda Strain*)

**Historical Matrix:** The 10th anniversary of *Star Trek* saw the first movie, with the plot brought to life from the ashes of "The Changeling" episode and a derailed *Star Trek II* series.

Amazingly, Paramount then almost

canned it when *Star Wars* became a hit, since they felt that the market might be over-saturated with SF! Leonard Nimoy almost didn't join the cast due to his lawsuit with Paramount over unauthorized use of his image in a beer ad.

**SFX:** 5/10. Computer graphics have made great leaps since 1979 — today your home computer is as good as these! But the model work is still superb on big screen or small. Too bad there was too much of it! *Star Trek* never depended on SFX to drive the TV show — they showed what was happening, and quickly, so the viewers wouldn't notice the strings! Huge looming space things and soaring music, intercut with too many gaping reaction shots, can only be done so much before audience eyes start to glaze over.

**Characters:** 3/10. Much too stiff. Veteran director Robert Wise hadn't watched the series much, and the script provided little of the familiar character dynamics, as when Spock enters the ship, and deliberately ignores the friendly greetings of his old crewmates. Slack-jawed wonder only takes you so far!

**Drama:** 5/10. Not much, considering that Earth and the Federation are about as endangered as they can get! Not much of a central villain, either: Persis Khambatta makes a yeoman-like attempt at being an emotionless robot, but there's no *there* there, nothing for Kirk to effectively emote against.



**Humor:** 2/10. Everything and everyone's too damn solemn.

**Sense of Wonder:** 5/10. There is a certain grandeur in the itty-bitty *Enterprise* flying through the giant spacetrack, there is wonder in those hexagonal construction blocks leading up to that tiny rust-hulk. But the awe muscle gets fatigued by slow pacing and an anti-climactic denouement.

**Continuity:** 3/10. No horrible gaps, but that's because very little is touched on in character backgrounds and personal lives. For all we know, the crew has been hanging on hooks in the Paramount office closets for the past 10 years of plot time!

**Overall Score:** 23/60. On the plus side, the creators really did try for an *epic* feel, but the series was never about epicness! Possi-





**LEIT** The death of Captain Kirk was the centerpiece of *ST: Generations*. **BELOW:** Nimoy took direction from Shatner in *ST V*: The Final Frontier. **OPPOSITE LEFT:** The Enterprise is refitted for *ST: The Motion Picture*. **OPPOSITE RIGHT:** *ST VI*: The Undiscovered Country took the crew on its "final voyage."

ror when Koenig and Winfield get those ear worms, some great obsessiveness from Khan, good SFX on spaceships blowing bits out of each other. About average for the series.

**Continuity:** 5/10. Good — Khan comes from the old series' "Space Seed" episode, even if he does remember Chekov, who joined the cast in the following season!

**Overall Score:** 39/60. Arguably Star Trek's finest two hours.

### Star Trek III: The Search For Spock

**Vital Stats:** Released 1984; Director: Leonard Nimoy ("Spock"; considerable back-

ground in directing Tv)

Historical Matrix: Nimoy made a big play to land the directorship, and the result seems to have vindicated the decision of the producers. It wasn't planned for sure that Spock would be brought back at all; the landing of Spock's burial torpedo on the Genesis planet was added just before the premiere of *Wrath*.

**SFX:** 7/10. More good space battles, more computer-generated space clouds, planets, and so on. Very little to complain about.

**Characters:** 6/10. Not as highbrow as the Dickens- and Melville-quoting director Meyer, but good solid work. Nimoy gets solid emoting from Shatner, particularly at the death of David Marcus. Slow spots drag the Marcus/Saavik/young Spock subplot, but Nimoy generally teases good acting out of even tertiary characters.

**Drama:** 6/10. This is a Quest story, and a puzzle story, and one about consequences: was the Genesis device everything that it seemed to be? Did Spock's sacrifice at the end of *Wrath* oblige his friends to further sacrifice? Good solid human problems drive this plot.

**Humor:** 5/10. Appropriate always. Christopher Lloyd's comic talents are hardly used, however. (And a serious-minded John Larroquette is one of his Klingon henchmen, too!)

by this score would be higher if seen in the cinema, in the 70mm projection: so the model work *would* make you gasp.

### Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan

**Vital Stats:** Released 1982; Director: Nicholas Meyer (*Time After Time*, *The Seven-Percent Solution*).

**Historical Matrix:** Perhaps it was the continued success of the *Star Wars* franchise that made the Paramount execs willing to try again? Perhaps they listened to the public who insisted that the first movie hadn't been enough like the TV series? Whatever, when producer Harve Bennett made the inspired choice of director Meyer, it was a good day for the franchise. Surprisingly, Meyer had watched the series even less than Wise had. Nimoy came aboard when Meyer told him that Spock would die in the first reel ... but then as the script went through revisions, that death kept getting moved forwards ....

**SFX:** 7/10. ILM rather than Douglas Trumbull this time out, and three years difference in computer technology shows, despite a cost one-third to one-quarter of *TMP*. Substantial model work was recycled from the first film, particularly the *Enterprise* in the docking bay.

**Characters:** 8/10. From the first scene, the characters are alive and

breathing. Dialogue is downright snappy, and old friendships, tensions, and friendly tensions are where they should be. This feels like the old show, only 15 plot years richer and stronger! Plus, Ricardo Montalban's lovely scene-chewing, the only ego in the series bigger than Kirk's....

**Drama:** 8/10. The stakes are lower than in the first movie — only a vengeful eugenic *ubermensch* with a Genesis bomb! Beyond that are themes of age, birth, death, and life renewal — children found, sons and friends lost. Spock's death scene was so good, they opened the next movie with it!

**Humor:** 6/10. All over the place, but not detracting from the serious tone.

**Sense of Wonder:** 5/10. Some good hor-





**Sense of Wonder:** 5/10. Genesis shaking itself to bits is relatively unexciting, but the Klingon Bird of Prey offers some more nice model work and interior design.

**Continuity:** 6/10. Nice! Since the theme of this movie is Consequence, it follows that elements in II are closely followed up on. Although, one has to ask: What happened to Carol Marcus, David's mother?

**Overall Score:** 35/60. The best of the odd-numbered movies, partly because it's a Part Two for *Wrath*.

### Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home

**Vital Stats:** Released 1986; Director: Leonard Nimoy

**Historical Matrix:** After the relative success of *Search*, how could Paramount resist? Particularly when the story was a lighter-hearted time travel plot to end the "trilogy" on a high note. The studio seriously flirted with the idea that Eddie Murphy might join the cast, which couldn't have helped but create a very different movie.

**SFX:** 6/10. The alien probe is convincingly alien, but 23rd century San Francisco isn't much shown. The effectiveness is heightened by the "realistic" setting, whether it's the garbagemen knocked off their feet by the invisible landing of the Bird of Prey (aka *HMS Bounty*) or the same crashing beneath the Golden Gate Bridge.

**Characters:** 9/10. Every member of the core cast gets to shine with good lines and good business. Scotty and McCoy have particular fun getting a tour of a plastics factory.

**Drama:** 5/10. Loses in deference to the humor quotient, but light-hearted adventure is true to *Star Trek*'s nature.

**Humor:** 8/10. Check out the timing when Shatner and Nimoy react to "old" San Francisco. Plentiful moments are laugh-out-loud funny, even on repeated viewing. Oh — and for once the *woman* dumps Kirk!

**Sense of Wonder:** 6/10. We get to see 1986 San Francisco through the eyes of Our Favorite Crew, and the Bird of Prey through the eyes of 1986 scientist Taylor. Plus it has the *Enterprise* — no, not the space ship, the nuclear aircraft carrier! — and *whales*, which are wonderful in their own right.

**Continuity:** 7/10. A direct continuation from *Search*, referencing events in *Wrath*, such as Kirk hocking the glasses he got from McCoy. Although one wonders what the U.S. Navy did with the phaser and communicator that Chekov's escape left behind...

**Overall Score:** 41/60. Not the emotional and dramatic powerhouse of *Wrath*, but a fun movie.



Lt. T'Pol Spock's burial from *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* was one of the most moving moments in any of the seven films.

But wonder-challenged SFX fall flat, and "God" looks like a guy in a false beard who's been printed in negative.

**Continuity:** 4/10. Spock's death is remarked on; he's still working out this human/Vulcan thing. We get insight into McCoy's past, which is good. Otherwise, the years these characters have worked together is not referenced, only assumed.

**Overall Score:** 26/60. For a first effort, Shatner didn't do horribly, but compared to the others this movie shows the lacks of its troubled production and inferior fizz.

### Star Trek III: The Undiscovered Country

**Vital Stats:** Released 1991; Director: Nicholas Meyer (*Wrath*)

**Historical Matrix:** Paramount scuttled Harve Bennett's plan to

produce and direct *Starfleet Academy* as a new movie franchise, and instead went with Leonard Nimoy's plan for a "final voyage" movie for the old crew. *Star Trek: The Next Generation* coming into its own as a syndication success may have influenced the decision.

**SFX:** 6/10. The budget was less than for *Frontier* in fact, but the technology had gotten cheaper. Check out the morphing of Iman's traitorous character, or the Bird of Prey blowing apart, or Klingons afloat in free fall.

**Characters:** 7/10. These familiar characters are being forced to go against their instincts; and a great guest cast does its best to give them something to emote against. Dueling Shakespeare quotes, anyone?

**Drama:** 8/10. A profound problem threatens the crew's very existence: How do you cease hostility with an enemy that you've been fighting all your life? Also, a genuine murder mystery that forces Spock to follow in the footsteps of his ancestor (Sherlock Holmes?) in order to solve.

**Humor:** 5/10. Mild, but once again appropriately so. Constant misattribution of quotes ("Hamlet" in the original Klingon!) and skillful wordplay are highlighted.

**Sense of Wonder:** 4/10. Mild. Good use of spaceship models and SFX blasts, but that's become standard for the series by now. Klingon Court scenes are the most viscerally impressive.

**Continuity:** 5/10. References back to previous movies — picture of David (Merritt) Continued on page 102

### Star Trek V: The Final Frontier

**Vital Stats:** Released 1989; Director: William Shatner ("Captain Kirk")

**Historical Matrix:** Department of Better-Off-Not-Getting-What-You-Asked-For: Shatner's contractual parity clause was invoked, meaning he got to direct since Nimoy did. Unfortunately for him, budget cutbacks forced script changes even as filming commenced: the ending was scaled down repeatedly, causing dramatic moments to be diluted. A more experienced director wouldn't necessarily have been able to compensate any better.

**SFX:** 3/10. Stiff and unconvincing in places, particularly spaceships projected against backgrounds, and "Godlike" effects. Alas, budget problems really dampened this aspect of the movie.

**Characters:** 5/10. Some good-to-great moments — but there are some embarrassments that make fans shake their heads, including Scotty knocking himself out. And to this day, some people shudder at the thought of campfire songs...

**Drama:** 5/10. Effective elements, such as Spock's dilemma about his brother, or Kirk's ultimately Kirk-like question: "What does God want with a spaceship?" are undermined by confused and under-written scripting and portrayal. A shame.

**Humor:** 5/10. Spock "pinching" a horse makes up for a lot of moments where the "humor" makes one laugh inadvertently.

**Sense of Wonder:** 4/10. Good rock-climbing sequence; something real to wonder at.

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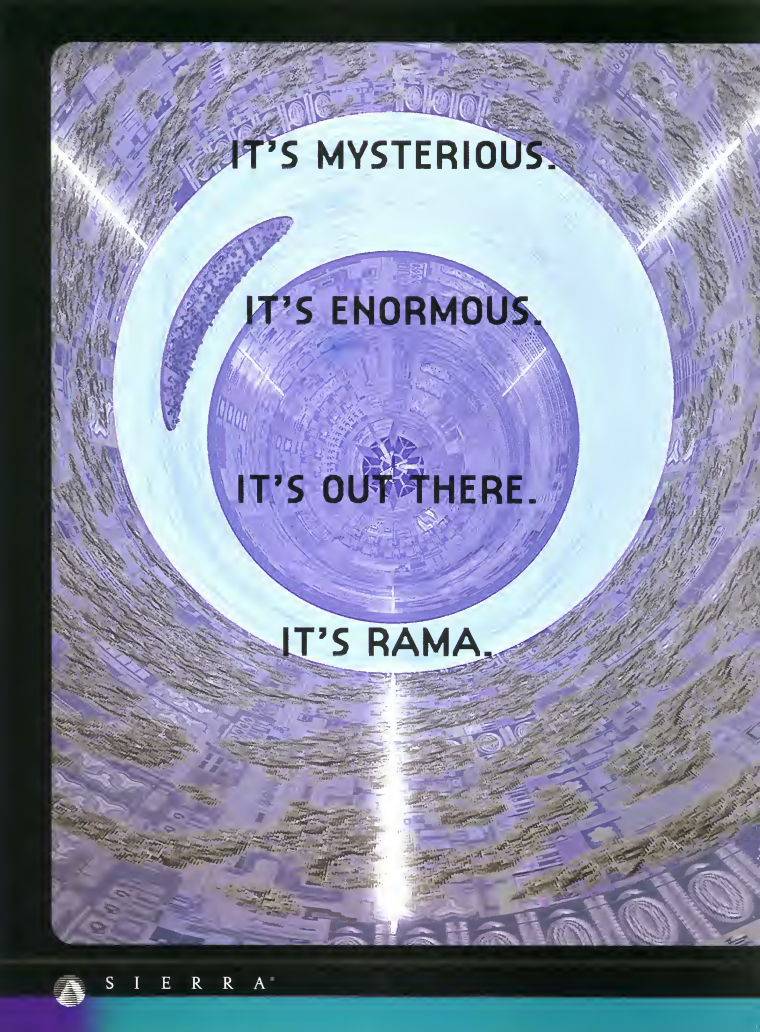
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# ATTACK OF THE ANGRY RED PLANET

**N**ASA'S RECENT DISCOVERY of primitive fossilized life forms doesn't hold a candle to the warped, gleeful menagerie of fun-loving nihilists invading America this winter. When the bug-eyed, big-brained, raygun-toting Martians fly in on bubble-topped saucers to lustily wreak havoc on Earth's denizens, the only thing that can fight them is an all-star cast of the biggest names in Hollywood. Is this the nightmare collision of *War of the Worlds* and *The Towering Inferno*? No! It's Tim Burton's forthcoming love song to the alien invasion

BY LISA MACCARILLO







**H**umans were decapitated, cities burned, the White House annihilated; even the family dog got zapped.

movies of the '50s and '60s by way of the controversial card set called "Mars Attacks!"

Issued during the height of the Cold War by the Brooklyn-based Topps Chewing Gum Company in 1962, the original "Mars Attacks!" card series depicted shocking, gory scenes of Martian hordes pillaging Earth. Humans were decapitated, cities burned, the White House annihilated; even the family dog got zapped. Not surprisingly, the cards were summarily pulled before distribution had a chance to spread to the West coast. "That was the inspiration for the whole thing," says Jonathan Gems, who penned the screenplay for the forthcoming big-screen adaptation of the card series. "It's basically the same story as *War of the Worlds* — but it's got a twist, which is that it's a comedy. Tim

wanted to do something that was really gruesome and grisly and funny, like those cards are."

"It's retro but not retro," says longtime Burton collaborator and former Oingo Boingo frontman Danny Elfman, who started his multifaceted composing career on Burton's *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*. *Mars Attacks!* is his eighth film with Burton. "This movie has a sensibility that taps back to the '50s and '60s, but it's not a parody of a '50s or '60s movie. What makes it fun — it taps into these earlier sources of inspiration but does it in a way that still feels fresh, which is similar to other things I've done with Tim."

Gone is any trace of a peace-loving E.T. reaching out to commune with the human race. These Martians are bad. They're mean. And they're not here to make friends. "They're actually fun-loving but they don't know what fun is," says producer Larry Franco. "They don't know what nasty is. What they think is fun is not quite the same as what we think is fun. So, it's a combination of fun and horror. What they do is horrific, but they do it unknowingly, which makes it not as horrific. You almost feel sorry for our little Martians, although you probably shouldn't."

"The Martians are everybody's favorite characters," adds Elfman. "They're really fun. They're really malicious. They have a lot of fun being really bad. And that's what I like





most about them. There's no two ways about it. They're mean little things. They like to shoot old ladies and crush kids and the Boy Scouts at the Washington Monument. They just do one nasty thing after another. And they have fun doing it, too. That makes me very fond of them. They're not like insects, on a mindless mission to destroy the world — they're doing it because they love it."

"I think people are going to be surprised by this movie," adds Gems. "People are used to thinking of Tim Burton as being dark, but this isn't a dark movie at all. It's a very positive movie. It's really all about love." It all started in May of 1994 when playwright and screenwriter Jonathan Gems stumbled onto the infamous "Dinosaurs Attack" and "Mars Attacks!" cards sets in one of the boutiques lining West Hollywood's Melrose Avenue. Gems had befriended Tim Burton when he did some writing on *Batman*, and subsequently wrote a few unproduced screenplays for the director. "I wasn't seriously thinking about doing anything with them," Gems recalls. "I just thought these things were funny and so I showed them to Tim. I said 'it would be great if you could make a movie about these cards.' It wasn't a serious comment at all, but about three months later I got a call from him saying that he had gotten Warner Brothers interested, and then he said, 'Do you want to write the screenplay?'"

With *Jurassic Park* fever in full swing, they

decided that *Mars Attacks!* was probably the better choice of the two card sets. "Tim was worried and I was worried because sci-fi just wasn't happening at all," explains Gems, who, in addition to numerous plays including "Naked Robots" and "The Paranormalist," numbers the filmed adaptation of Orwell's classic 1984 as well as *White Mischief* among his credits. "I was always a big sci-fi fan. I was one of those guys who goes to the opening of a *Star Trek* movie. And Tim really wasn't so much. He needed a little bit of persuasion that sci-fi could be okay. I used to be in the fashion business, and what I learned from the past is that you always know that when something's really out of fashion, that's the time to do it. If you do like the studios do — whatever was a hit last year — you know you're going to be screwed. But if you do something that is totally uncool, then by the time it comes out everybody is going to want to see it. Sci-fi was not cool back then. So, I had a strong feeling that it would be

ABOVE LEFT: The Martians arrive in our nation's capital, offering their own special brand of greeting. TOP: Citizens who rally to welcome the aliens to Earth soon discover their mistake. ABOVE: President James Dale, First Lady Marsha Dale, and daughter Tuffy (Jack Nicholson, Glenn Close, and Natalie Portman) watch the Martian alert while surrounded by their presidential advisors (played by Pierce Brosnan, Martin Short, and Rod Steiger). BELOW LEFT: Press secretary Jerry Ross (Martin Short) falls under the spell of the Martian girl (Lisa Marie).

really cool to do a sci-fi film at that point in time. And then the weirdest thing happened: About a week or two weeks after Warner Brothers announced that they were buying the rights to "Mars Attacks!" for Tim Burton, about six sci-fi projects were greenlighted by different studios."

RIGHT: The Martian visitors address an awed and uncertain Congress. FAR RIGHT: President James Dale (Jack Nicholson) holds the fate of the world in his hands as he plans Earth's defense in the military War Room. CENTER: Professor Donald Kessler (Pierce Brosnan) attempts to reason with the alien attackers. BELOW: When the Martians visit our planet, they discover a new life form — Las Vegas showgirls.



With Gems' script and Burton's weird and wonderful imagination, the initial budget estimates for the project were prohibitively high. "The movie was being budgeted at well over a hundred million dollars and the studio was obviously not going to want to make a movie with that kind of a budget," remembers producer Franco, who is credited with single-handedly shepherding the budget down to a more reasonable figure. As a fan of the stop-motion technique popularized by Ray Harryhausen (apparent in his stewardship of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*), Burton wanted his Martians to move with the jerky awkwardness attained by this retro technique. "But the time it was going to take to accomplish each one of these stop-motion animation shots and then digitally composite it into the movie was outrageous."

Franco, who had just produced the effects-heavy *Jumanji*, knew the same effect could be accomplished using the continually evolving digital-effects techniques honed to a science by Industrial Light & Magic. "The real trick was to be able to convince Tim that computer animation was the way to go," he says. "One of the things that really disappointed Tim was being forced into a format that he really didn't want to use. Just coming off of *Jumanji*, I knew because of the technology that it was possible to use computers to get the same effect. So, we did a test of actual Martian stuff which was completely computer-animated but left out the 'blur' aspect that ILM has perfected. Basically, it's starting with the same



thing — an inanimate object that has certain points that bend — but it's manipulated with the keyboard instead of with the hands. I'm sure Tim understood it intellectually but emotionally he couldn't deal with it until he was able to watch the technique in action up on the screen. Then we went and took a tour of ILM and watched the animators actually animating on the computer screen, and slowly Tim started to get a handle on it and really enjoyed it."

Although digital technology helped usher the project into production, there still

remained the substantial number of characters that needed to be cast. "Tim had this concept to do the movie like an Irwin Allen disaster movie, like *The Towering Inferno*," Gems notes. "If you look at the posters for those movies they've got like 20 famous actors on them. I can't remember if it was *Earthquake* or *The Towering Inferno* that had the most stars. But that was part of the concept. The idea was to do a disaster movie with lots of stars in it. The joke would be that the Martians would be like '50s Martians, like in *War of the Worlds*, and they would just blow all these stars away. It was fun until we got to casting. No agent in town wanted their stars to get blown away after one or two scenes."

Although the filmmakers did not have the luxury of using big salaries to lure in talent, Franco remembers "from the very beginning there was a real excitement about doing it. I think Sarah Jessica Parker was the first one to climb aboard and Pierce Brosnan





and then Glenn Close and then it just started a mountain."

Gems, whose favorite character is Taffy, the disaffected First Daughter, played by Natalie Portman, adds: "It seemed like the whole cast was having fun being in the same room with those sorts of big-name people. Here you were in a small set with Jack Nicholson, Glenn Close, Paul Winfield, Marty Short, Rod Steiger, Pierce Brosnan. You're looking around going 'Oh, my God, I don't believe I'm here.' They're all doing the same thing — 'I don't believe I'm in the same room with these people.' It was a lot of fun for everybody."

The rumor that Nicholson was forced to play two parts to make the most of his high salary earns a hardy giggle from Gems. "He wanted to play three parts," says the screenwriter. "He was originally offered the role of the Las Vegas businessman, Art Land, but when he read the script he said, 'Yeah, I'll do

that. What about the president, can I do that too?' And Tim couldn't say no. Jack is wonderful. He's very much the spirit of the movie. He was like the father on the shoot. When you're the leading actor there's a tradition that you take responsibility for the other actors on the shoot as a whole and it's something that Jack keeps doing, which is very, very, nice. A lot of the actors hadn't worked with Tim before or they were only in for a few days, but Jack was very charming, like an ambassador. He helped, together with Tim, to create a wonderful feeling on the set. He was like the dad — well, like a psycho dad. He was like a cheerleader for the movie."

"He was having a blast playing the president," adds Franco. "In fact, the soundmixer had a tape of 'Hail to the Chief' buried somewhere and so when it was time for Jack to walk on the set here comes 'Hail to the Chief.' Jack really liked that. He's the king. There's no question about it."

**They have a lot of fun being really bad. And that's what I like most about them.**

It's like  
Beetle-juice  
meets *The  
Day the Earth  
Stood Still...*  
a '50s retro  
Tim Burton-  
esque movie.

The star-studded ensemble includes Glenn Close, who is more famous for her serious fare, as the obsessive-compulsive First Lady; Annette Bening as Art Land's new age guru wife; and Pierce Brosnan, Jim Brown, Paul Winfield, Martin Short, Danny DeVito, Lucas Haas, Michael J. Fox, Pam Grier, Lisa Marie, Sylvia Sidney, and superstar entertainer Tom Jones round out the cast in various natural and preternatural roles. Rod Steiger plays a war-mongering general who recalls George C. Scott's Gen. Buck Turgidson in *Dr. Strangelove* (subtitled *Or, How I Learned To Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*).

Steiger's performance isn't the only thing reminiscent of Stanley Kubrick's great satire of politics and war made during the same era in which the cards were released. There are inspired bits of homage sprinkled throughout the movie, from Nicholson playing dual roles (Peter Sellers played three in *Strangelove*), to the dramatically stylish War Room, which has small-scale model saucers



ABOVE: Danny DeVito, playing a lawyer, and lounge singer Tom Jones, playing himself, must defend Las Vegas against the invaders. ABOVE RIGHT: The ruthless sneak attack of the Martians catches most Earthlings off guard. BELOW RIGHT: The Martian emperor expresses his unhappiness with the slow pace of our planet's destruction. INSET: Director Tim Burton on the set of *Mars Attacks*.





and bombers scattered like kids' toys across the floor. The references, says Gems, are deliberate: "There's a story behind our War Room. The guy who designed the War Room in *Dr. Strangelove* is a guy named Ken Adams. Great, great production designer, probably the best ever. He designed all the great early Bond films and was one of those designers who would start fashions. The magazines would copy his designs. Apparently this is true: After he was sworn in, Ronald Reagan was given a tour of the White House and at the end of the tour he said 'Where's the War Room?' And they said 'We don't have one, Mr. President.' He thought that *Dr. Strangelove* was real. So, he ordered that one be built. About three stories down in the basement is a War Room that looks exactly like the War Room in *Dr. Strangelove*. That's what we saw in our minds for this movie — the War Room from the last days of Ronald Reagan."

While some of the year's high-profile alien invasion movies were rushed into theaters this past summer despite starting production after *Mars Attacks!*, many of those involved see this synchronicity as business as usual in Hollywood. "*ID4* grossed \$200 million but it was our idea!" says Gems. "One of the reasons that film is so full of holes, which people kind of joke about, is that they had to get it out before our movie came out."

Ironically, one of the most famous "Mars Attacks!" cards pictures the White House blowing up, an image that became the calling card of *Independence Day*. "I was shocked when I saw it," says Gems. "But Tim has been through this before. He knows that it's important to be secretive and he didn't want anybody to announce this thing. Unfortunately, the guys from Topps wanted to trump this deal."

*Continued on page 92*

*The truth is still out there.*

## Good things happen in threes, and the

first three seasons of *The X-Files* have been about as good as it gets. The show has captured the interest of the mainstream without losing its cult status, and has led FOX Television's continued media challenge against the old-line American television networks of ABC, NBC and CBS. Chris Carter's *The X-files* and *Millennium* are indeed authentic contenders that FOX hopes can out compete anything the heavyweight networks can throw in the ring at them. But success has its own special curse in store for any creator, because fans and critics begin to ask the inevitable question: How long can this go on?

Chris Carter knows the pressure of success all too well. Internet surfers are well aware of the negative reactions concerning the decision to move *The X-Files* from its powerfully popular, ratings steal-

"July 17th was the first day of filming for the fourth year and we have a great script, which is a continuation of the 'to be continued' cliffhanger from season three. And we've got some great new stuff and the same, mostly, great staff in place. I can tell you that we are going to a location other than Vancouver for the first episode to do a little bit of filming. And that's a little bit of a stretch for us. We're shooting in a little town called Kamloops, which is about an hour's flight from Vancouver, and it gives us a nice look that we wouldn't get otherwise. It's something that we, in year four, have the luxury of doing. I went and scouted it in June. It's really a river valley, golden rolling hills, and it's got an arid quality, a big blue sky that you can't get in Vancouver. Space, blue sky and spacious panoramas. It gives us a look for the show's fourth season start something a little different."

# THE NEXT X

## CHRIS CARTER SPEAKS OUT

ing Friday nights, to perhaps a nail biting Sunday evening, opposite the major network's competitive "Sunday Night Movies" timeslots. Speculation also continues as to whether the show can continue its eerie search for the truth at the same level of quality. Series creator Chris Carter recently sat for an interview in order to share his views on this momentous time change, as well as why he believes viewers feel there is some concern for this change, and what to expect from the fourth season as a whole.

"I think everybody resists change, that is the biggest thing. I think that some people think that (Sunday) is a night where they're preparing for work the next day, and kids might not be able to stay up. It's a school night. I'm hoping that parents break those rules for their children. I'm also hoping that it doesn't suffer in any way. I think the resistance is really one of what has become a habit. People have changed their viewing habits, and now they've got to change them again. Well, they actually don't because now they can watch my new show *Millennium* on Friday nights now." (He laughingly puts in a plug). "So I think that was the big resistance. I'm just hoping that it dies away and that people come back to the show because it's good."

"For the season, we also have some surprises in store, in terms of the mythology of the show, character-wise. And I think that, like all good *X-Files* episodes, this first one poses many more questions than it answers. And I'm very excited about season four being even better than season three."

## "Once you have hit all the highlights,

like clairvoyance, telepathy ghosts, all these things, everyone says, 'Haven't you exhausted some of the highpoints of the show?' The truth is that we've exhausted some of the high points, but I think

now actually they're better stories, more interesting stories, the ones that are not so obvious, the ones you have to look for and pick away for and find in the little nooks and crannies that actually are ideas. And the best *X-Files* episodes come out of ideas, and so sometimes, I think the show will be better because the stories will not be in the obvious areas, the places you'd expect. So far, I know what is going to happen through the first eight episodes. That's all I can say."

Carter's secretive stance regarding the details of the show's future



BY DR. CRAIG REID





**ABOVE:** In the fourth season opener, Jeremiah Smith (Roy Thinnes) holds the key to saving the life of the mother of Agent Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) **LEFT:** Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) are back for another season of conspiracies and paranoia.



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KIDS TO ADULTS



are equalled only by the level of mystery that makes its way each week to screen. Carter's palette of paranoia has included cracking cases regarding evil serial killers, aliens and alien abduction, fluke monsters, bugs, and whatever other paranormal phenomena *The X-Files* team can dream up — far from your normal TV fare. What has Carter unleashed upon the American psyche and what is his formula for the show's success? After *X* comes *Y*, and Carter here attempts to provide just that, the "why" of our fascination with things that go bump in the night that he has unleashed on the viewing public.

## "Have I unleashed something? I don't

know, I mean, it's inadvertent. I think I've opened the door for the genre. I think that science fiction has always been around. It's always been something that has succeeded in certain ways. And now it seems to be succeeding in a giant way, and so everyone thinks that you're a cause of it, or a part of it. I'll take that credit for the genre, but I'm just really one of many people who have written about this subject, the unexplained. I deal with the show in a very hands-on way, and because the shows are very movie-like, they take a lot of attention to detail, unlike some other drama shows on television.

"They're done at a distant location. We do a lot of it outside the studio. The secret of success is in preparing the shows to be done well, and having the scripts just right, and

called, wonder whether there will eventually be any sort of a crossover between his two programs, as we have seen with Rob Tapert's and Sam Raimi's sparkingly successful television shows, *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* and *Xena: Warrior Princess*.

"When we do the feature film, I hope that it actually dovetails with what we do on the TV series, that actually pushes the mythology forward. They would like to do the feature actually before the finish of the run of the show. That's a subject of some debate right now, but I think that whatever I do, I want to do it so that it strengthens the show, not weakens it, and that it doesn't just take the life out of it by doing something that is so big you can't ever recover on the series. They would actually like to shoot the feature late this spring. And I think there are talks in the works right now about all that. I just want to make sure that when we do this *X-Files* feature that we don't just do it to do it, that we do it right.

"In terms of *Millennium*? Actually, I haven't told Dave and Gillian about it yet." He laughs. "Really though, I am going to resist the temptation for a while. It's a natural crossover. It's just easy to do. I always resist the obvious, and so that's just one of those things that I won't be doing for a while."

When asked if he is saving a crossover for later, just in case *Millennium* doesn't get off to a great start, he laughingly quips, "Exactly. Seriously, more responsibility of *X-Files* has gone to Howard Gordon (co-executive producer in America) who has been with the show since the beginning. And so he'll be taking a bigger share of responsibility. Plus,



having all the crew ready to go. To do that requires me to be in Vancouver. Just for *The X-Files*, last year for 20 of 24 episodes the last two days, or more sometimes, are required for prep. If you don't, there are a lot of people working

I have a writing staff that's a little more seasoned now. I actually don't spend that much time on the set of *The X-Files*, to be honest. I spend the time up with the production unit that is preparing to go onto the set. So I will still be doing that. I hope to do it on both shows for a certain short while until I can find the people that I can trust to do those things. But it's really the way you have to do a show in order for it to be good and be the way you want it to be. So, that's what I am determined to do.

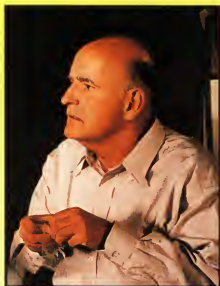
## "As for writing, I wrote the season

opener for both *The X-Files* and *Millennium* this year. Beyond that, I'm sure I'll be writing constantly until May. I think I've written about a third of the episodes, total, of *The X-Files*. We've done seventy-three to date. And I've done a lot of re-writing too, it's the job that I do. And I don't see myself scaling back. I'm constantly writing, and I write everywhere. When I was on the set of *Millennium* when we were producing the pilot, I was actually writing or re-writing *X-Files* episodes. Rod Serling once said that if he dropped his pencil, he was two weeks behind. I know what he meant.



on a show, and somehow the show can take on a life of its own. It's one of the reasons something can fail. There are many reasons a show can fail. There are very few ways it can succeed. So I think that what's frightening to me is that it's a prospect of trying to do two shows now (*X-Files* and *Millennium*) at that level of quality, which I know can be done. It's really a matter of finding people that I can bring along with me, who can help me to do the good work. And I think last year was, for me, a big accomplishment because I thought the show got actually better in year three than it had been the previous two years."

But *The X-Files* and its creator will face additional pressures and fresh challenges as Carter picks up the reins on his new brainchild, *Millennium*, and tackles the up-and-coming feature film version of *The X-Files* which now looms heavily on the horizon. Fans of the show hold their collective breath while awaiting Carter's success at juggling his executive producing, directing and writing on these shows. Additionally, the *X-Files*, as the more hardcore fans are





"I've also been asked where do I get these ideas? You just have a sensitivity, a taste, and an affinity for a certain material, and you see ways to tell stories that interest you, and that's really the way I approach it."

## Over the course of three seasons, *The*

*X-Files* has created its own system of classification for delineating which shows fall under which of their inventive categories. There are the "mythology" shows that tackle the larger conspiracies the characters strive to solve, which includes the alien entities and the government. Interspersed with scary "stand alone" episodes there also appears to be some "off the wall" stories which shares many elements of Hong Kong's "Fant-Asia" film (that wild and wooly, frenetic paced genre of action that uniquely combine elements of science fiction, horror and fantasy), but are definitely Western in flavor and humor. Carter offers these insights and shares with us a few of his favorite episodes.

"Only a fraction of the year is devoted to the mythology, about six of twenty four episodes. It's really a small amount, and I think what it does is it gives a chance to show the characters in a way that you don't get to see them in the regular episodes. They aren't just investigators of the paranormal. They are together passionately trying to uncover what looks like a giant conspiracy.

"But the humor has been a big part of the show since the beginning, and that episode with Charles Nelson Reilly ("Jose Chung's From Outer Space") and the Peter Boyle episode ("Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose"), which were both very popular, were both written by a guy name Darin Morgan, and even though Darin is not with the show this year, we hope that he might find it in his schedule to come back and do a couple more episodes.

"In terms of favorite episodes? I have many. From the first season one of them was 'Beyond the Sea' where Scully's father dies and where this death row convict can possibly channel to her dead father. And in the second season, in one of our first two-part episodes, where we went to the arctic and we had a submarine actually

burst out of the polar ice-cap. I really loved that and it showed what the production value of the show could be, where the show could go emotionally with storytelling."

In this day of TV star hold-outs, the man responsible for the hottest show on the Fox Network speculated about his special relationship with the show's stars Duchovny and Anderson. What caused them to enthusiastically come back to the show, in sharp contrast to the shenanigans that have plagued NBC's *Friends*, for example, where the entire cast held out for more money?

"It's hard to say. They're both friends of mine. I stay away from the negotiations, to be honest. They both re-negotiated their contracts last year, so that's out of the way. I have said to them, and I think they are party to this, that I just want to do, for me, five years, really good years of *The X-Files* and look back and say we did our best work. And that's why I haven't left the show. If they will devote, you know, their five years to it, so will I, and anything past that is gravy. But that's really what I'm shooting for right now, and I think that's the spirit in which we approach the job."

When asked if he is under any pressure to do something with Mulder and Scully's relationship, he quickly intervenes, "No. I'm under no pressure to push that relationship forward. The pressure I'm under is David Duchovny wants a girlfriend and I've resisted that for a year. I had such a hostile reaction from the Internet folks about even talking about it, that I'm afraid for my life if I were ever to put him in a compromising position."

Carter's confidence comes through strong and clear, and one thing is for certain — that as the fourth season of begins, the show's future still looks X-cellent and X-citing. And that's no X-aggeration. □

*LEFT: Top-notch guest stars such as Roy Thinnes, Hrothgar Matthews, and Peter Boyle contribute to the show's air of dread. ABOVE: Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) continues her quest to disprove the paranormal. BELOW: Chris Carter, the spiritual father of both The X-Files and Millennium.*





# X appeal

Which supernatural show inspired by Fox's cult hit will survive?

BY DAN PEREZ

It's an inevitability that hit TV shows will spawn imitators. The popularity of shows like *Seinfeld* and *Friends* had television executives scrambling to produce similar shows, from *Ellen* ("sort of like *Seinfeld*, but nicer, and with a female lead") to *The Drew Carey Show* ("kind of like *Friends*, but with real people holding down real jobs").

Fox's huge hit *The X-Files* is no exception, having inspired a number of new,

supernaturally/conspiratorially-tinged shows last year (*American Gothic*, *Strange Luck* and *Northside Man*), all of which failed the ratings test and were cancelled. This year, a new set of shows are slated to compete for the attention of legions of X-Philes. Of these, which will win viewers and which will become also-rans? It's hard to predict, but here are some educated guesses as to what we can expect.

**MILLENNIUM** (Fox, Friday, 9-10 p.m. ET) is progeny of the creator of *The X-Files* himself, Chris Carter. *Premise*: Lance Henriksen stars as Frank Black, an ex-FBI agent with an uncanny talent for empathy, who joins forces with the mysterious Millennium Group to investigate terrible serial crimes attributed to the coming of the Apocalypse. Also starring Megan Gallagher and Bill Smitrovich. *Perks*: Carter is, of course, the creative force behind the show that started the trend, and Henriksen is a genre-friendly actor with serious cult appeal. Time slot competition is practically nonexistent. The pilot is designed to shock and disturb, and the show itself should retain many of the elements *X-Files* fans have come to savor. *Problems*: Unfortunately, those same fans are disgruntled that *Millennium* is displacing *X-Files* from its primo Friday night slot to Sunday. *Prediction*: Having already cleared their Fridays in perpetuity, fans will watch anyway, making *Millennium* a strong contender for renewal, and possibly Fox's newest hit.

NBC, no stranger to hit shows, offers up **DARK SKIES** (Saturday, 8-9 p.m. ET).

BELOW LEFT: Navy captain Frank Bach (J. T. Walsh) and Washington D.C. staffer John Loengard (Eric Close) examine an alien artifact in *Dark Skies*. RIGHT: Jeffrey Dean Morgan (foreground) stars as a viral detective in *The Burning Zone*. FAR RIGHT: Frank Black (Lance Henriksen, to left) is an ex-FBI agent caught up in the coming Apocalypse in Chris Carter's *Millennium*. BELOW RIGHT: Ally Walker stars as a psychic hunter of serial killers in *The Profiler*.





**Premise:** Eric Close and Megan Ward star as a 1960s couple who discover that an invasion by aliens known as "the Hive" (with attendant government coverup, of course) is shaping major events in history, including the Kennedy assassination. Also starring J.T. Walsh. **Perks:** An intriguing and ambitious premise, which spans four decades of American history, laced with some of *X-Files*' favorite tropes (aliens, shadowy government doings). Tobe Hooper (*Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Salem's Lot*) directed the pilot. **Problems:** Strong time-slot competition by established shows on other networks, including Fox's *Cops* and CBS's family-oriented hit *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman*. **Prediction:** The show will appeal to genre fans, but ratings may not be strong enough nevertheless. Dickey.

Later on Saturday, NBC tries again with *THE PROFILER* (Saturday, 10-11 p.m. ET). **Premise:** Ally Walker stars as a forensic psychologist with an unusual, possibly psy-

chic, talent for getting into the minds of serial killers and other criminals (à la Will Graham in the Thomas Harris novel *Red Dragon*). **Perks:** Ally Walker's hardbitten performance in the lead role. Time slot competition a lot less rough, with *Walker, Texas Ranger* being the only other ratings grabber. **Problems:** The premise, already familiar thanks to movies like *Manhunter* and *The Silence of the Lambs*, may not support the series. **Prediction:** Chances of survival: slim at best.

UPN enters the fray with *THE BURNING ZONE* (Tuesday, 9-10 p.m. ET). **Premise:** Jeffrey Dean Morgan and Tamlyn Tomita star as a virologist and molecular geneticist enlisted in a secret medical task force battling a variety of bizarre diseases, including a seemingly intelligent virus that controls the minds of its victims. **Perks:** Topicality—the show is riding the wave of medical thriller popularity. The pilot, involving the hive-mind virus, was scary and atmospheric. **Problems:** Extremely stiff

time-slot competition—the show faces off against *Home Improvement* on ABC and *Frasier* and *Caroline in the City* on NBC. Exotic disease-of-the-week premise likely to wear thin very quickly. **Prediction:** Prognosis negative.

Remember that of the 42 news television series introduced last year, only nine survived into this season. It will take a miracle for more than one of these supernatural shows to make it into the new year. TV viewers, place your bets! ■

"Richard Bachman's" weighty tale of supernatural vengeance tips the scales on the big screen.

# Thinner: King's Latest Winner

BY DAN PEREZ

IF YOU LOOK BACK TO THE BESTSELLER LISTS AND book review columns of 1984, you'll see mentions of a hot new author who was hailed as a possible successor to publishing superstar Stephen King. Reviewers noted the similarities in style and voice between Richard Bachman's latest book *Thinner* and King's work. And then the news broke. Bachman

could never be a pretender to the Kingman's throne. He was the Kingman. Or rather, the Kingman's *nom de plume*.

Stephen King's phenomenal prolificacy, whether writing pseudonymously or under his own name, has made for a seemingly unending stream of movie and television miniseries adaptations of his work. One Bachman book, *The Running Man*, has already been made into a movie, and now director Tom Holland is putting *Stephen King's Thinner* on the big screen.

The screenplay, written by Tom Holland and Michael McDowell (*Beetlejuice*) has a simple plot: prominent attorney Billy Halleck (Robert John Burke) weighs 300 pounds, diets halfheartedly, and lives the good life with his wife and daughter. His weight is no obstacle in the courtroom, where Halleck has just secured the acquittal of Mafioso Richie Ginelli (Joe Mantegna). But things go awry when Halleck accidentally runs down an old Gypsy woman and uses his influence and



knowledge of the legal system to sidestep responsibility for his actions. The dead woman's father (played by Michael Constantine) lays a deadly curse on Halleck, causing him to lose weight at a dramatically accelerated pace, and seemingly without any end. Wasting away, a desperate Halleck calls on Ginelli for help, and the mobster's brutal attempts to force the Gypsies to lift the curse only hasten Halleck's moral decay.

"Stephen King's *Thinner* is about moral culpability," says Tom Holland, who directed ABC's highly rated miniseries *The Langoliers*,



ABOVE: Successful attorney William Halleck (Robert John Burke) and acquitted mobster Richie Ginelli (Joe Mantegna) have only a brief moment to celebrate before the supernatural intrudes. FAR LEFT: Stephen King continues his tradition of making cameo appearances in film adaptations of his books, this time as the local pharmacist. LEFT: Special Effects makeup artist Greg Cannom (at right) aids in beefing up actor Burke.





as well as episodes of *Tales From the Crypt*. "It's about a man who refuses to accept responsibility for his actions, and finally ends up eating, both figuratively and literally, his own just desserts. The story demonstrates that it's dangerous to blur the edges between wrong and right. Although Billy is essentially a nice guy, his refusal to pay for his mistake causes his body to become his enemy. His horrible situation leads him on a desperate race against time. I think it's a fairly sophisticated piece conceptually because it deals with moral responsibility or the lack thereof. The biggest problem is dealing with the darkness in a commercial way."

"Billy Halleck's waistline widened with this professional success," says Stephen King of the psychology behind his story. "He feels it's justified for him to run from his mistake because people in his position are entitled to sweep things under the rug."

Holland notes that his is a very faithful adaptation of the novel, and goes on to explain his take on the appeal of King's work. "He puts real people in unreal situations, which gets his audience to connect with the characters. America's obsession with losing and gaining weight is the human commonality that makes this story so understandable to so many people."

Robert John Burke (*Robocop 3*) describes his role as Billy Halleck as a depiction of "a loving family guy, a good husband and father who unfortunately likes to eat a lot

At the start, he jokes about his obesity, but when he starts losing weight, it's a classic example of denial. At first he's thrilled to be losing weight, but soon he realizes there's a serious problem and experiences shock, anger and depression.

Burke, who normally weighs 175 pounds, endured not only hours of prosthetic makeup for his role, but went on a liquid diet to lose weight for the "skinny" scenes. "He helped us by losing 20 pounds along the way," says Holland. "He went to a nutritionist, that kind of thing. He was trying to burn the body fat, and get it down to zero body fat. He did a hell of a job."

Of his role as Richie Ginelli, Joe Mantegna says, "Billy and Richie are from opposite worlds, but their need for each other has created a bond. My character is indebted and loyal to Billy for getting him acquitted. Now Billy's the one in trouble, and Richie's going to deal with it — strongly. He wields power with fervor and actually relishes the opportunity to get his hands dirty again."

Holland came to the *Thinner* project "when it was at Warner Brothers, when it was put in turnaround there. We spent years trying to get it done. And when we were trying to get it done is how I was offered *Langoliers*. The whole process took from '89 to '96."

Holland's directorial work also includes the films *Fright Night* and *Child's Play*. Holland, who also directed *The Temp*, is quick to point out that his horror movies owe a lot to



the suspense thriller genre. "I'd argue that most of the horror I've done has *really* had a huge dollop of suspense in it. That's really what makes *Child's Play* work. And *Fright Night* has it, too."

He notes that the biggest technical challenge in making Stephen King's *Thinner* was the makeup-related effects: "How to make the illusion of somebody going from 300 pounds to 127 work." To facilitate this, Hol-



ous. What would happen is that you put him in the makeup and let's say he was in stage three [of a four-stage prosthetic fat suit] — that means you can only do stage three scenes, so let's see if we can find locations where you're doing stage three scenes where you can just walk across the street from one to the other. It's much more complicated than that, but that's what you're trying to do."

Burke's makeup itself was a formidable obstacle. "He gets exhausted," says Holland. "At one point he's wearing over forty pounds of makeup. He can't breathe through a lot of his pores because latex is over them, and he's on a diet at the same time, so his energy level is precarious. Bob had dealt with it before; he did *Robocop 3* and he really was in superlative physical condition. But he did everything he could to help us."

**H**ow do you create the illusion of a 300-lb. man who slims down to less than 120 pounds in just a matter of days? That's the challenge that Greg Cannom faced when he agreed to handle the special makeup effects for *Stephen King's Thinner*. Cannom, who won Academy Awards for his makeup effects in *Mrs. Doubtfire* and *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, outlines the makeup strategy for actor Robert John Burke: "There are ten stages of full changes of makeups, going from 300 pounds or so down to 119 pounds, and there's ten complete different looks. There are subtle changes between those looks — some of the makeups will work for two different stages: his eyes will get a little darker, coloring will get lighter, veins will start appearing, so there are probably about sixteen to eighteen stages altogether for Robert. He starts at what we're calling about 300 pounds, or 310. We made him a little heavier so we'd have a way to go with him. We did a test makeup with him and it was about 290 or 300 — we went a little heavier just to give it a better character. So he goes from about 300 down to what we're calling about 280 pounds and it's still pretty normal. The third stage is about

FAR LEFT: Director of Photography Kees Van Oostrom sets up the next shot as Robert John Burke and Adriana Inchaustegui are given tips by Director Tom Holland. LEFT: Billy Halleck (Burke) starts to lose his sanity along with his weight. CENTER: Tadz Lempke (Michael Constantine) places a deadly curse to avenge his murdered wife. BELOW: Billy Halleck continues wasting away, in state-of-the-art special effects that stripped him of 180 pounds in a matter of days.

260 pounds, and he's starting to droop a little, just around the mouth and slightly around the neck area. The fourth stage definitely has some lines around the mouth, and he definitely getting some real sags [here and there]. Fifth and sixth stage is about 180 to 170 pounds and he's really starting to droop — he's got a lot of flesh hanging. From there down to the 119 stage there's an enormous amount of sagging.

"What I'm trying to do in this film is not do really horror makeup because it isn't that kind of a movie. The word I'm using is disturbing, so that when [Halleck] gets down to 119 pounds, hopefully he'll be a little shocking, but it won't be horror makeup. Makeup works better if it's subtly done. Even though we're going way over the top in this, much more than a realistic [movie] would be, I'm trying to keep it subtle in a way that's believable — it isn't like a vampire or a werewolf. It's believable, but it's far beyond anything anybody could go that way with.

Most disturbing will likely be Burke's final makeup, which Cannom describes: "When we first started, everything was dropping on Robert: it was big folds and big saggy things and that. And then when I worked it out into doing kind of a combination mummy makeup with all the skin hanging — there's absolutely no fat in it or anything — just like paper-thin skin hanging everywhere, it really works well.

"One thing that was difficult: Robert has a great face to work with; it's just perfect, but he has a very long neck and it's very muscular. So when he got thin, we could sink him in [in the hollows of the face] really well, but his neck was so hard. So what I did was ... that all these folds are kind of draped in a way to try and hide his neck, so that it looks a lot thinner than it is in the neck area, and it works very well. Then at the end we have a double: we're doing a mechanical puppet and a double when he's at 119 [pounds] to achieve looks of him walking and everything."

Holland has no immediate plans for another *King* adaptation. "I've just done two, back to back," he says with a hint of weariness in his voice. But he doesn't discount the possibility of working on another *King* project in the future. "I think Stephen, at this point, is writing a combination of some of the best original ideas with strong characters. I think he's been getting more interesting." □

land and the crew had to shoot the movie in actual chronological sequence, which is almost unheard of in filmmaking. Was it difficult? "God yes," he says. "I mean, we were losing one-half to one-third of the day getting the actor into makeup. It was a big, big job. He's in every scene. You try to schedule the show so that you can do the maximum amount of work with the time you have. You try to figure out locations that are contiguous

BELOW: Derek Rayne (Derek deLint) and Rachel Corrigan (Helen Shaver) are members of The Legacy, a centuries old organization dedicated to battling the supernatural RIGHT: One of The Legacy's problems—how do you kill enemies that are already dead?





# "THEY'RE HEEERE!"

*The horrific cable hit Poltergeist: The Legacy brings its supernatural success story to a first syndicated season.*

BY FRANK GARCIA

**Y**ou won't hear actress Heather O'Rourke's famous chilling cry as Carol Anne Freeling or see the rest of the Freeling family in *Poltergeist: The Legacy*. What you will discover is a group of very special individuals who compose an ancient underground society that knows more about ghosts and supernatural creatures than anyone else on this Earth.

Now premiering in syndication across the country, *Poltergeist: The Legacy* first made its presence known on our television screens on Showtime Cable last April. For those of you who've been unable to catch the show because of that, the producers promise to present viewers with spine-tingling, shocking tales of the supernatural beginning with a brand-new premise and characters.

*Poltergeist: The Legacy* is an apt title since it owes its existence to the first film that starred Craig T. Nelson and JoBeth Williams in 1982, as well as to its sequel *Poltergeist II: The Other Side* (1986), and to *Poltergeist III* (1988) which starred Pickett Fences' Tom Skerritt.

The series is the brainchild of Richard B. Lewis, one-third partner of the Trilogy Entertainment production company along with colleagues Pen Densham and John Watson. Last year Trilogy, successfully revived the classic SF series *The Outer Limits* for Showtime. It's still going strong, and has recently been renewed for an additional two years. It continues to play in syndication across the country.

When MGM/UA approached Trilogy about the idea of making a television series based on the *Poltergeist* fran-

chise, the task and responsibility fell on Lewis' shoulders.

After reviewing all of what had gone before, Lewis realized he could not extract a workable series premise from any of the three films, so invented a new one: "What if we created a group of people who had been dealing with paranormal, supernatural experiences for a long time?" says Lewis, recounting his thoughts that led to the show's genesis. "I was talking to the head of the [MGM/UA] studio and said, 'What if it's a group of people who were a secret society, almost like the Freemasons, who have been around for thousands of years? What if there was a legacy?' And he said, 'That's it! *Poltergeist: The Legacy*.'"

The *Legacy* is an ancient, powerful secret society working on an island off the coast of San Francisco. Their task? Save the world from dark, supernatural evil as it manifests across the earthly plane. Their tools? Knowledge accumulated from centuries of former *Legacy* members, the latest technological equipment, and the financial resources of a philanthropic institution.

"I posited that these people have existed as a secret group in the pursuit of understanding," says Lewis. "These people are looking for spirits. They have high-tech equipment; but at the core of it, there's knowledge that's been brought down through the generations. These people are the offspring of the original founders.

"There is evil out there. People get entranced by the dark side. What our group has to do, as they're the last bastion of good, is counter the dark forces set upon the world.



## **SF is at the core of what we love the most.**

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." — The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians.

"Don't bet on it." — First Editorial of Scott Edelman, new editor of *Sci-Fi Entertainment*.

Don't listen to the naysayers, to the ones who would have you be ashamed of the things you love the most. I've been having to tune them out all of my life. They're out there, ready, willing and able (if you let them) to separate you from your dreams. Ignore them.

We all need childish things, whatever our ages. We need space ships that travel faster than light, stunt men in rubber monster suits trampling miniaturized cities, and visions of alien races that live on worlds where no one has gone before. We need *Buck Rogers* and *Star Wars*.

We need science fiction.

As you can tell, my childish things were all science fictional, and my ascension to the position as current editor of *Sci-Fi Entertainment* is but the latest step in my life-long path to the stars. I would never abandon my childish things, for without them, I would not have travelled so far.

My earliest childhood memory is of a metallic green robot toy received as a Christmas present when I was three. Ray guns shot sparks out from its chest, and perhaps shot me full of a love of SF as well.

I am a child of the television age, and my first TV memory is of *Colonel Bleep*, an animated SF cartoon short of the late '50s, now long forgotten, that took place "a million light years from the present" aboard the spaceship *The Wonder Rocket*. As primitive as the show would probably seem to you now, when I close my eyes, I can still feel the sense of wonder with which I was filled.

I devoured comic books at an early age, swept away by the Silver Age of comics. I remember standing before a newsstand rack, my one dime sweaty in my hands as my glance moved from the first issue of *The Avengers* to that of *The X-men*, unable to decide which of Stan Lee's dreams to embrace. For what, after all, were telekinetic mutations and transisterized battle armor but science fiction?

In 1970, I was the first person to register at the first *Star Trek* convention, held at the Statler-Hilton Hotel in New York City. In col-

lege, while some were playing poker, I played a *Twilight Zone* trivia game with like-minded friends, guessing plots and actors and twist endings.

I never lost.

We are all like that here in this SF world, you and I. We might not agree on the particular shows, but I am sure that you also have similar, personal memories. But I am very grateful, for I am luckier than most. I have turned my science fiction past into my own personal science fiction future.

When I left college, I went to work for Marvel Comics, and later on wrote such science fictional comic books as Marvel's *Captain Marvel* and DC's *Time Warp*. I sold treatments to Laurel Entertainment's *Tales From the Dark-side* that were made into three eerie episodes, and briefly dabbled in Saturday morning cartoon work on such characters as *Space Ghost*. Along the way I sold about forty short stories and a novel, and published and edited the critically-acclaimed SF magazine *Last Word*.

For the past five years I have edited *Science Fiction Age*, one of Sovereign Media's other genre magazines, which also includes *Realms of Fantasy*. And now, I continue to turn my childish things into the stuff of life by taking over the editorial reins here.

But before we proceed with the rest of the issue, I'd like to first thank founding editor Ted Klein and former editor Bob Martin for putting together such a terrific package up until now. They have set high standards which we will do our best to follow.

The world is catching up with the SF of my youth. Each day looks more and more like science fiction itself. We're not yet careening about the stars in atomic jet-packs, but I write these words 35,000 feet in the air, flung through the air strapped within a metal can they call a plane. I am on my way to the 54th World Science Fiction Convention in Anaheim, California, drafting this editorial on an 11 ounce miracle of a computer called the Hewlett Packard 200LX.

As I type away on a machine that can fit in my jacket pocket and is itself science fiction come to life, I am even more determined to prove that what some in this world call childish, we who love SF call necessary.

Welcome to my future. Welcome to science fiction. Welcome to the continuing journey that is *Sci-Fi Entertainment*, the fruition of all my childish dreams.

Scott Edelman

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**RIGHT:** In the series episode "Town Without Pity," the members of *The Legacy* must deal with a village reminiscent of the Salem Witch Trials. **FAR RIGHT:** Gifted psychiatrist Dr. Rachel Corrigan (Helen Shaver), the most recent member of the secret organization, needs all her skill and training to survive her new challenges. **BELOW and BELOW RIGHT:** The special effects for *Poltergeist* were enhanced by the experienced background of a creative team that has also worked smoothly together during the production of *The Outer Limits*.

*Poltergeist* follows in the success of Trilog's companion series *The Outer Limits*, with a guaranteed 44-episode order. With so many network shows today being subject to a dropping axe after just five or six shows, *Poltergeist* has been given a substantial shot at getting the attention of an audience over two seasons. To tell the tale of *The Legacy*, Lewis invented five individuals who wield insightful historical knowledge and unique personal talents in their eternal battle against the forces of darkness. "Our five Legacy members have all experienced traumas in their lives," reveals Lewis.

The point man of *The Legacy* is Dr. Derek Rayne, played by the distinguished Dutch actor Derek De Lint, whose acting credits include *Soldier of Orange* (1977) and *The Great Escape II: The Untold Story* (1988).

"He's a mysterious man. You don't know much about him," says De Lint of the character he is creating. "He doesn't have a family, he's totally obsessed and dedicated. He inherited [this career] from his father, because of what happened to him when he was 15 years old. He saw his father die in front of his eyes [battling a demon], and he's become almost totally obsessed in the fight against evil. He's definitely a leader."

De Lint says that it's joyful to play a character who's a tortured soul and who possesses psychic powers because "it's more fun to play than happiness. That's boring, you know. There should always be conflict. Crying is much easier than laughing. To be totally happy is very, very hard to play and not be boring after one minute. And drama is conflict. There must be a tormented soul — there's so much to play here, it's wonderful."

Behind Rayne are four team members. One's a gifted psychiatrist, Dr. Rachel Corrigan, played by veteran Canadian actress Helen Shaver, who has extensive acting credits including her acclaimed film role in *The Color of Money* (1986). Shaver admits she is intrigued by the premise of the series. "What's interesting about this character is, I am surrounded by a cast of unique individuals; this secret society.



It is interesting to play because in this show I am a mother with a daughter."

This seven-year-old daughter, Katherine (as played by actress Alexandra Purvis), provides an interesting, emotional background to the character. Years before, Corrigan's husband and 10-year-old son were killed in a car accident. Shaver explains that Rachel became a psychiatrist because her life was heading out of control; then she married, and life took on a normal course until the automobile accident.

In the two-hour premiere episode, we see Rachel Corrigan in Ireland. As lavishly as the producers are spending on this project, the company still cannot afford to actually film in that country, so "I shot on Vancouver Island, in Beacon Hill Park, where we doubled for Ireland," notes Shaver.

Because of supernatural events that take place in Ireland, this introduces Corrigan to Dr. Rayne, *The Legacy*, and their mission on

Earth. "I'm not part of *The Legacy* in the pilot," says Shaver. In fact, her character figures very importantly in the opening story, giving birth to evil, and this is when *The Legacy* comes to the rescue.

Shaver promises that in future episodes of the series, "sometimes the world comes to us, other times we go to the world. We're linked to the world and the other Legacy houses around the world through computers and through classical and less traditional forms of communication."

Standing by Dr. Rayne's side are other colleagues: as brilliant researcher Alex Moreau, newcomer actress Robbi Chong steps into the role. "I work within the Legacy House with my co-workers and I deal with things freaky and supernatural! She also has psychic powers. She has the ability sometimes to see into the future!" exclaims Chong, who previously worked with director Barry Levinson in

*Jimmy Hollywood* (1994). Chong is the daughter of comic Tommy Chong and is the sister of actress Rae Dawn Chong. "It's very scary. I just saw one of the shows without the special effects and I was pleasantly scared out of my wits. So, when they put it together, it's going to be pretty powerful! I think it's going to be a surprisingly strong show."

Adventurous Nick Boyle is played by actor Martin Cummins. "He's our early-Brando, early-James Dean. He's very avant-garde, very intelligent," says Chong, of Cummins' performance in this series. With roles in





*Omen IV* (1989) and *Friday the 13th Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan* (1991), Cummins is no stranger to the supernatural genre.

Talking to Cummins, he muses about the fine line between what science and religion can explain about supernatural phenomena. "There's so much we don't understand. It's interesting to pick up a script each week and find these things that I never thought possible going on! You can go anywhere with this show! It's not set by any parameters of reality. These are real people. They carry on their lives like anyone else, but set at this base of normalcy, they're connected with these bizarre events that ... suck you in, and you buy into the world that's going on."

Rounding out the team as Irish priest Philip Connolly, actor Patrick Fitzgerald agrees heartily with Cummins' assessment of the show's prospects for growth and evolution. "It's a flexible show. I can see *The Legacy* is almost like a religious organization, like the church. There's not much difference for me between serving as a priest or as a member of *The Legacy* except that the calling is different from one to the other, obviously. Of all the characters, I'm the one who's ready for that discipline. Playing a priest is great, because there are no doubts that the demons are definitely there."

The *Legacy* work from a Victorian mansion on an island off the coast of San Francisco, under the cover of a charitable organization known as the Luna Foundation.

Producer Richard B. Lewis promises that the show will not be confined to just ghosts or goblins. "We'll be running across the genre," he says. To provide a clearer glimpse of what's ahead for the show, Lewis sketches the story lines of already-filmed episodes. Typically, the subjects are very strong and potentially controversial.

"What is a poltergeist?" wonders Lewis. "It's an unsettled spirit, someone whose life was taken too quickly, before their time, who feels they're wronged and are looking for closure in the spirit form so they can go to heaven or whatever. That's what we're dealing with. It's haunted spirits. The little child who walks through the house. The old lady people see in the gardens — all these things we've grown up with.

Before he returns to shepherding his latest child into the airwaves, Lewis remarks, "We have free rein creatively to do whatever we

want, at whatever level of intensity in sexuality or violence. What's great is we don't have a network breathing down our necks telling us how to do our stories. We have an advantage by having 44 episodes to lay out characters in advance of where we want to go and take some chances and be a little different. In our mind, because we're primarily a motion picture company, these are movies. That's the way we approach it.

"What we're getting to do is take a bit of an adventure here. The fun for me personally is telling these morality tales, educating an audience about historical literature. By positing that this society existed for a long time, I can even stretch to Edgar Allan Poe, or Robert Stevenson, or Socrates as secret members of *The Legacy*."

Asked if he thought the show could be done as a regular network show, Lewis retorts, "No way! I wouldn't do it! We're spoiled right now. We tried to do a couple. [Trilogy] did a couple of pilots, and it was good fun, but the restrictions and competition you get is overwhelming. The appetite for new shows, every ten seconds, doesn't allow you the running time to do it or to build an audience."

*Poltergeist: The Legacy* will have its chance to find that audience. The series has already been slated for 131 markets, representing 84% of the television viewing audience. Check your local listing for day and time, because as Heather O'Rourke told us, "They're heeereee!" □



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## MARS ATTACKS!

Continued from page 77

Fortunately, says Franco, "Our film is a completely different experience on every level. It's about a Martian attack on Earth and how it affects life here. That's the essence of the movie. Of course it's not the normal Martian attack that you might think because it's Tim Burton's Martians attacking. You have to think of it that way. It's like *Beetlejuice* meets *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, if you can picture that. It's a '50s retro Tim Burtonesque movie. Tim has done enough films now that people kind of have a feeling for his vision and his sense of humor. I'm sure you're thinking of what it might be but forget it. Nothing can prepare you for what you're going to see."

Franco, whose exploits include firing a weapon out of a moving helicopter in John Carpenter's *The Thing*, which he produced, and working as an assistant director on the legendary jungle shoot of Francis Ford Coppola's masterpiece *Apocalypse Now*, sees the source of Burton's unique vision as his refusal to grow up. "I hope he never does. That's his charm. People should just see him on the set. He's so excited. He's like a little kid with a brand new stack of "Mars Attacks!" cards. It's really fun. It's really unique. That's what Tim is. And that's what these movies are. He has a unique situation of being able to be the child that he is and have the business people accept that. As long as his movies keep doing well then they will accept that. A lot of things about this movie are a little different from the norm. It has a huge cast, which is nowadays kind of impossible to pull off; and it would be hard for me to think of a director, other than someone like Tim, who could get all these people to come in and work for less money and have a good time and not be difficult. I just think there's a boyishness about Tim that really shines through throughout the whole process, and people really respond to that."

"Movies are just getting more and more predictable," adds Elman. "To me it's refreshing to see something coming from an individual personality that isn't coming from a demographic perception. The result is having produced a thing anybody could have done; if other directors had done it it would have been different, but not significantly. But with Tim's movies, they are *his* movies. Nobody would have done this movie quite the way Tim did it. Even with the same script, it would have been a whole different thing. Tim puts his own sensibilities into the stuff and makes a movie that is his in every way. When you see his movies, you distinctly know — if you tuned into it late or missed the credits — that it's definitely a Tim Burton movie. There's no doubt about it. There aren't many directors who can do that."

*Mars Attacks!* opens in the United States on December 13. □

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Airwolf, Voyage/Bottom Sea, Time Tunnel, Brisco Co.,  
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# The science fiction of the starship *Enterprise* could become science fact, say two noted physicists.

BY LAWRENCE TUCKER

**B**ACK IN THE '50S THE TV SHOW *DISNEYLAND* once spent an hour examining the wackily surreal physics of cartoons: Goofy strolling blithely off a cliff, unaware he isn't on solid ground, and not falling until he chances to look down; Donald Duck in an elevator, stretching as the car descends and compressing as it comes to a stop; some other character folding up like an accordion when a safe drops on his head. The

episode was entitled "The Plausible Impossible"—and the same phrase came to mind as I read *The Physics of Star Trek* by Lawrence M. Krauss (New York: HarperCollins, 202 pp, \$20). For just as in the world of animation, things happen in the *Star Trek* universe that defy all

it seems, astronomers were puzzled by slight deviations in Mercury's orbit, contrary to what Newtonian physics would have predicted, and they theorized that these might be caused by an as-yet-undiscovered heavenly body. "It was suggested that a new planet existed inside

Mercury's orbit," says Krauss. "The name given to the hypothetical planet was Vulcan." The real reason, he explains, was not Vulcan, but Einsteinian curved space—a concept that, once allowed in, like some cosmic Trojan horse, allows with it a host of wild possibilities. "Along with curved space," Krauss assures us, "come black holes, wormholes, and perhaps even warp speeds and time travel."

Time travel? Can the man be serious? Well, if you don't care to take Krauss's word for it, how about that of the world's most famous living physicist? That's right; Krauss' book sports an astonishingly optimistic foreword by none other than *Star*

*Trek* fan (and sometime actor) Stephen Hawking, who gives the show his seal of approval: "We may not yet be able to boldly go where no man (or woman) has gone before," he writes, "but at least we can do it in the mind."

Hawking acknowledges that faster-than-light travel "is absolutely essential to *Star Trek's* story line," and that the idea is fraught with problems: an astronaut hurtling toward a distant star, for example, even if he's traveling well below the speed of light, may experience as a decade or two what, to observers on earth, would seem a voyage of thousands of years. "Fortunately," writes Hawking, "Einstein's general theory of relativity allows the possibility for a way around this difficulty: One might be able to warp spacetime and create a shortcut between the places one wanted to visit."

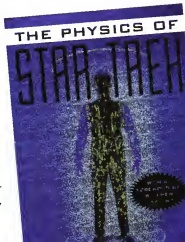


Warp speed laser battles might be a scientific possibility, say the authors of a recent speculative book.

the known laws of physics, but it's the task of the writers to make us accept them as perfectly reasonable.

Yet in some ways, surprisingly, that's Krauss' task as well, because his book is anything but a debunking study of faster-than-light drive, antigravity, and all the other phenomena associated with SF movies and TV. In fact, Krauss is at pains throughout the book to point out not merely where *Star Trek* goes wrong (and he details a number of places, which I'll get to in a moment), but to demonstrate how some of the mind-stretchingly improbable things we're shown may actually be—in theory, at least—within the realm of possibility.

He reveals, for example, that "the planet Vulcan, home to Spock, actually has a venerable history in 20th-century physics." In the early 1900s,



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Although there are problems of negative energy, it seems that such warping might be within our capabilities in the future .... One of the consequences of rapid interstellar travel would be that one could also travel back in time."

I hope he's working on those little "problems of negative energy" he so offhandedly alludes to, because I have a hankering to visit the 1939 World's Fair, and maybe the Globe Theater.

Krauss himself is a professor of physics and astronomy at Case Western Reserve University. He may not be as famous as Hawking, but *The Physics of Star Trek* is certainly an easier read than Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*. Interestingly, Krauss is also the author of an earlier book, *Fear of Physics: A Guide for the Perplexed*. This new one might almost deserve the same title, for it provides a quick, clever, breezy, once-over-lightly introductory course in physics, using the TV show as its jumping-off point.

Krauss defends *Star Trek's* cast of aliens from a dismissive remark made by Nobel laureate Sheldon Glashow ("They all look like people with elephantiasis!"), noting, as a true fan should, that the show does offer, "in the sixth season of *The Next Generation*, a rationale" for this familial resemblance: It turns out that "some very ancient civilization" seeded hundreds of planets throughout the universe with the same genetic material, from which all of us, humans and aliens

alike, are descended. "There are approximately 100 billion galaxies in the observable universe, each containing more or less than many stars!" he writes elsewhere. "There are roughly 400 billion stars in our galaxy. It would seem truly remarkable if our Sun were the only one around which intelligent life developed."

But if Krauss finds things to praise for their scientific accuracy — such as the depiction of an outer-space gunfight in which all the little drops of blood flying around the ship are spherical, just as they would be in zero gravity — he also points out *Star Trek*'s many lapses, from the vast (he pooh-poohs the notion of “parallel universes” existing in other dimensions) to the small: He notes that in the rock-climbing scene at the start of *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier*, when Spock breaks Captain Kirk’s fall just inches from the ground, the sudden stop would kill Kirk just as quickly as actually hitting the ground.

Similarly he observes that, in real life, acceleration to light-speed would reduce the *Enterprise's* crew to what *The Star Trek Encyclopedia* describes as "chunky salsa," and he remains skeptical of what the show's writers dreamed up as a way of getting around that small problem: a passing reference, left unexplained, to "inertial dampers." Clearly writers can get away with things that scientists cannot.

Finally, there's what he calls "the infamous

Ghost error," in which a noncorporeal spirit can pass its hand through objects or walk unimpeded through walls, yet it can also seat itself in a chair or stroll across the floor. Krauss asks, in a section title, "Which is more sensitive, your hands or your butt?" and concludes, "Matter is matter, and chairs and floors are no different from walls, and as far as I know feet and butts are no more or less solid than hands." His parting advice strikes me as extremely wise: "Any sensible trekker-physicist recognizes that *Star Trek* must be taken with a rather large grain of salt."

*More Gore Score*, by Chas. Bahun, Key West: Fantasma Books. 103 pp. \$12.95 pb

Speaking of chunky salsa, here's a slim guide to splatter movies by an author who, according to the bio on the last page, "has been searching for the Ultimate Chunkblower since birth."

A sequel to Balun's *The Gore Score*, the book is filled with great black-and-white photos and some nifty quotes (says a character in *Dead Pit*, "For dead people, they sure are smart!"). Its minireviews are sometimes raw, often hilarious, and always knowledgeable (though director Adrian Lyne comes off as "Lynne"), reflecting Balun's passion for this controversial genre — and his equally passionate contempt for films that waste his time. "Trust me on this one," he says, recommending a Japanese film called *Ironman*; and we do. □

[illegible]



foundation, expanded on it and utilized it to our advantage. We can now go in and sculpture things and manipulate tones. We were limited back in 1988 by the types of images we could put on screen. It was very cumbersome. Now we can create anything in a computer, whether it's replication or adding and subtracting images. We can cut and paste any image onto or out of a scene like surgery. We can get down to the essence, control it and do anything we want. Technology has come a long way with this picture."

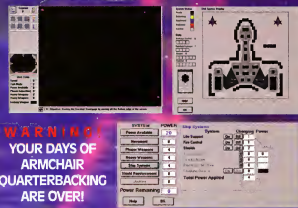
The biggest breakthrough will be the seamless virtual environments created for two of the key set-pieces in the movie. One is a 1940's type gym where Jordan and his pals practice. The other is the stadium where the actual basketball game occurs, featuring a crowd of over 25,000 animated characters.

"The reason we created these environments is we could have never controlled a real stadium in the way we're doing here," says Jones. "There's too many extreme examples, and we could never control that many people. Besides if you think about the Looney Tunes, historically the cartoons have very oblique, exaggerated camera angles and we wanted to do that in this film. You couldn't do that with certain lenses and angles, so instead we could later exaggerate the images in the computer. There are camera moves that you wouldn't be able to get otherwise, such as slow tracking shots. So basically what George Lucas is talking about doing in the *Star Wars* movies, we're doing in this movie. This is the future of filmmaking and the very beginning of 'virtual' movies."

Even though *Space Jam* will be a technical wonder for the eyes with all its jaw-dropping visuals, Smith notes that these techniques should only be viewed as the trimmings to the much bigger picture — namely a family film that will engage viewers with its clever story and humor.

"This is really an homage to the older Warner Bros. animators like Bob Clampett, Chuck Jones and Fritz Freleng," says Smith. "They were really at the top of their game some 40 or 50 years ago and doing something very different from what Disney was doing at the time. That's why the period of the '40s is considered by some to be the Golden Age of animation — because there was a lot of diversity and a lot of different product from different studios who had unique approaches each time around. I think we're entering another Golden Age of animation today. And I think this movie will make that apparent. It's very different from a Disney film — we're certainly not doing *Snow White* — and that's the best part about it. The Looney Tunes span several generations and all audiences can enjoy it on several different levels. And I think this film just might bring those generations together." □

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# NOVEMBER • DECEMBER U.S. PROGRAMMING SCHEDULE

## DAYTIME

| TIME  | Monday - Friday                                  | Saturday               | Sunday            |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| 6:00  | Informational                                    | Informational          | Informational     |
| 6:30  |                                                  |                        |                   |
| 7:00  | Animation Station                                |                        |                   |
| 7:30  |                                                  |                        |                   |
| 8:00  |                                                  |                        |                   |
| 8:30  | Inside Space (Anti-Gravity Room / Friday)        |                        |                   |
| 9:00  | Monday: The Flash / Tue-Fri: Lost in Space       | Saturday Anime (movie) | Sci-Fi Trader     |
| 9:30  |                                                  |                        | Sci-Fi Buzz       |
| 10:00 | Ripley's Believe It or Not                       |                        | C-Net Central     |
| 10:30 |                                                  |                        | The Web           |
| 11:00 | Dark Shadows                                     | The Anti-Gravity Room  |                   |
| 11:30 | Dark Shadows (Fri: Trader)                       | The Odyssey            | The New Edge      |
| Noon  | Sci-Fi Series Collection                         | My Secret Identity     | Inside Space      |
| 12:30 |                                                  | Dracula: The Series    | SF Vortex         |
| 1:00  | Mysteries, Magic, Miracles                       | Swamp Thing            | Alien Nation      |
| 1:30  | Monsters                                         | Trailer Park           |                   |
| 2:00  | Night Gallery                                    | Moonlight Matinee      | Sightings         |
| 2:30  | Mon: Odyssey Tue-Fri: Ray Bradbury Theater       |                        |                   |
| 3:00  | Buck Rogers/Battlestar Galactica/Galactica 1980* |                        | Moonlight Matinee |
| 3:30  |                                                  |                        |                   |
| 4:00  | The Bionic Woman                                 | Radiation Theater      |                   |
| 4:30  |                                                  |                        | Radiation Theater |
| 5:00  | The Six Million Dollar Man                       |                        |                   |
| 5:30  |                                                  |                        |                   |
| 6:00  | The Series Collection**                          | Amazing Stories        |                   |
| 6:30  |                                                  | The Odyssey            | Sci-fi Trader     |

## EVENING

| Time  | Monday              | Tuesday             | Wednesday           | Thursday            | Friday                    | Saturday       | Sunday              |
|-------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| 7:00  | Twilight Zone       | Twilight Zone       | Twilight Zone       | Twilight Zone       | Twilight Zone             | TekWar         | SF Vortex           |
| 7:30  | Tales/Dark Side     | Tales/Dark Side     | Tales/Dark Side     | Tales/Dark Side     | SF Vortex                 |                | Trailer Park        |
| 8:00  | Forever Knight      | "V"                 | "V"                 | "V"                 | Sightings                 | Sci-Fi Feature | Amazing Stories     |
| 8:30  |                     |                     |                     |                     |                           | Film           | The Odyssey         |
| 9:00  | Time Trax           | Time Trax           | Time Trax           | Time Trax           | Kolchak the Night Stalker |                | The Flash           |
| 9:30  |                     |                     |                     |                     |                           |                |                     |
| 10:00 | Friday 13th: Series | Friday 13th: Series | Friday 13th: Series | Friday 13th: Series | Sci-Fi Buzz               | Sightings      | RoboCop: The Series |
| 10:30 |                     |                     |                     |                     | Inside Space              |                |                     |

## LATE NIGHT

| Time     | Monday              | Tuesday             | Wednesday           | Thursday            | Friday                    | Saturday       | Sunday              |
|----------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| 11:00    | Twilight Zone       | Twilight Zone       | Twilight Zone       | Twilight Zone       | Twilight Zone             | TekWar         | Trailer Park        |
| 11:30    | Tales/Dark Side     | Tales/Dark Side     | Tales/Dark Side     | Tales/Dark Side     | SF Vortex                 |                | SF Vortex           |
| Midnight | Forever Knight      | "V"                 | "V"                 | "V"                 | Sightings                 | Sci-Fi Feature | C Net Central       |
| 12:30    |                     |                     |                     |                     |                           |                | The Web             |
| 1:00     | Time Trax           | Time Trax           | Time Trax           | Time Trax           | Kolchak the Night Stalker |                |                     |
| 1:30     |                     |                     |                     |                     |                           |                | The New Edge        |
| 2:00     | Friday 13th: Series | Friday 13th: Series | Friday 13th: Series | Friday 13th: Series | Sci-Fi Buzz               | Sightings      | RoboCop: The Series |
| 2:30     |                     |                     |                     |                     | Inside Space              |                |                     |
| 3:00     | Informational       | Informational       | Informational       | Thriller            | Thriller                  | Thriller       | SF Trader           |
| 3:30     |                     |                     |                     |                     |                           |                | Informational       |

All programming shown Eastern Standard Time. Please adapt for your local time zone. All programming subject to change. This schedule is effective through 12/29/96. \*Buck Rogers, Battlestar Galactica, and Galactica 1980 are shown in rotation. \*\* Sci-Fi Movie airs one week per month. SF Series Collection titles are Space Rangers, Hammer House of Horror, Nightmare Cafe, Invisible Man, Mann and Machine, Planet of the Apes. \*\*\*Friday: 8:30 am: Anti-Gravity Room.



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